

# HARVEST OF LETTERS



Canadian Lutheran  
World Relief

## Supporting Smallholder Farmers

### WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

We all know farming is important. Agriculture provides us with food to keep us healthy and productive, and contributes to our economic health as communities and as a country.

Support for agriculture in developing countries is also one of the best ways to alleviate hunger. In the developing world at least 70 percent of people who regularly go to bed hungry live in rural areas. Many of these people are smallholder farmers, a majority of whom are women. Supporting smallholder farmers will enable them to improve their family's health, nutrition and household income, reducing the need for measures such as food aid.

Improving smallholder agriculture paves the way for progress in other sectors, including health and education. It is vital for building strong populations and strong economies.

### Canada's support for agriculture in developing countries

Since 2009, Canada has taken a leadership role in global food security, launching a Food Security Strategy for developing countries that prioritizes sustainable agricultural development, nutrition and food assistance.

Canada's commitment to nutrition and food assistance has remained strong, but support for agriculture is falling. Canada's increased investment in sustainable agriculture is important for two reasons: Canada's direct funding can improve the success of smallholder farms; and Canada can influence other countries to also increase their investment in agriculture, bringing the world closer to ending hunger.



## What can we do?

Use your voice. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours, and to speak out on their behalf. As Canadians, we have the tools to influence our government, and a government capable of making a big difference in the world.

Write a letter urging the Canadian government to invest in smallholder agriculture in developing countries. Financial support for improved farming practices and other appropriate innovations can make a difference in the lives of farmers, their families, and their communities.

## Tell your Member of Parliament!

Send a letter to your Member of Parliament to tell her/him:

- You care about poverty and hunger in the world.
- Canada can reduce hunger by investing in agriculture in developing countries.
- Canada's support should focus on smallholder producers, especially women.

**Women Farmers** - If women had the same access to land, seed and credit as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 25–30 %. This would feed another 150 million people. (FAO, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11).

**What is a smallholder farmer?** Most farmers in Africa, Asia and Latin America are smallholders, with less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land. They produce food for their families and for sale in the market place. They make up many of the hungry people in the world, so an effective way to reduce hunger is to focus on these small farms.

**Competition for Canadian farmers?** Is there a risk that supporting smallholder agriculture in developing countries will increase competition for Canadian farmers? No. Overall food demand is growing quickly, and most of Canada's exports go to middle-income countries. All farmers around the world contribute to ending global hunger.

**Improved farming practices** – What works for Canadian farmers doesn't necessarily work for farmers in developing countries, who have smaller farms and different soils, climate and markets. From Foodgrains Bank's own work overseas we know that many farmers cannot afford expensive seeds and fertilizers, but they can improve their farms with sustainable practices such as conserving soil moisture, utilizing livestock manure, and reducing losses in stored grain.

## Checklist for promoters and event planners

- Have copies of this handout, writing paper, envelopes, and pens ready for the group.
- Learn more about this issue on our website.
- Be prepared to identify MP names/ridings by postal code. This information is available at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)
- Fill out the Harvest of Letters report and mail it to Canadian Foodgrains Bank – or fill it out [online](#).
- Letters may be sent postage-free to the Parliamentary address of MPs:

MP name with title  
House of Commons, Parliament Buildings  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

[foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/letters)

# Sample Letter

Handwritten, personal letters are an effective way to reach a Member of Parliament. You can use the sample letter below as a guide, but it is important to make the letter your own. No form letters, please!

If you would prefer to send an email, you can find your Member of Parliament's email address at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca). Use the subject line: Supporting farmers to end hunger.

**It's a good idea to start with something positive.**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of your Member of Parliament) \_\_\_\_\_,

I am pleased that Canada has taken a leadership role on global food security, and that Canada is prioritizing aid for sustainable agriculture, nutrition and food assistance. These are all important aspects of ending global hunger.

**Don't assume your MP knows about this issue. Some context will help him/her to take the appropriate action.**

However, Canada's aid spending on sustainable agricultural development is in decline. As a supporter of Canadian Lutheran World Relief, a member of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, I would like to see Canada's aid restore a focus on agricultural development, especially for smallholder farmers and women.

**Our current government prioritizes maternal, newborn and child health – make the link between better farms and better health for mothers and children.**

Supporting smallholder farmers is an important and effective way to reduce world hunger and promote the health and well-being of all, especially mothers and children. It is also vital for building strong economies and a safer, healthier world.

I urge the Canadian Government to increase financial support for the world's most vulnerable farmers. I request that you convey this important message to the Prime Minister's Office and to the Minister of International Development.

Sincerely,

**Make sure your return address is somewhere on the letter so that your MP can reply.**

**Be clear about what you're asking for.**

**Make the letter personal. Are you studying international development? Did you grow up on a farm and can appreciate the challenges farmers face? Have you been on a food study tour? Mention it.**



**Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church-based agencies working together to end hunger.**

- ADRA Canada
- Canadian Baptist Ministries
- Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
- Canadian Lutheran World Relief
- Christian and Missionary Alliance Canada
- Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
- Mennonite Central Committee Canada
- Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Canada
- Presbyterian World Service & Development
- Primate's World Relief & Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada)
- The Salvation Army
- The United Church of Canada
- World Relief Canada
- World Renew (Christian Reformed Church)

## Thanks for sending a letter!

Please remember to tell us about your letter — send the Harvest of Letters report below and share it with others.  
Find more resources to support your letter-writing event at [foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/letters)

### Harvest of Letters Report *(or fill out online at [foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/letters))*

We held our letter-writing event on / I wrote my letter on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Main contact person \_\_\_\_\_ Name of church/campus/group \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_ Church Affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ Ph \_\_\_\_\_

Our event was attended by \_\_\_\_\_ people (if applicable). Number of letters gathered: \_\_\_\_\_

MP \_\_\_\_\_ #of letters \_\_\_\_\_ MP \_\_\_\_\_ #of letters \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please rate the Harvest of Letters resource on how clear and easy-to-use it was: (5=clear, useful; 1=not clear, difficult).**

Please circle: 5 4 3 2 1 Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Canadian Foodgrains Bank | PO Box 767 | Winnipeg, MB | R3C 2L4 | 1.800.665.0377**