

**Activity 5.1** (45 minutes+)

Can you beat the system?

- This simulation game introduces learners to the idea of a *global food system*, by putting them in the position of a small-scale farmer producing food which goes into this system. By doing so, it highlights to learners some of the inequalities of the system, and helps them to think about some of the challenges that small-scale farmers face within this system.
- **Resources**
  - One copy of the *Crop template* per group (Activity sheet 1)
  - Copies of the *Group scenarios* (Activity sheet 2)
  - One example of a completed crop per group
  - One pencil per learner
  - Four sheets of blank A4 paper per group
  - Two pairs of scissors per group
  - Two colouring pencils per group
- Display the *Crop template* (Activity sheet 1). Ask learners if they know what sort of food it is. Explain that it is called *maize*, a crop which is grown on many farms across the world.
- Ask learners if any of them have eaten maize. Some will have, but many may not realise that they have. Point out that sweet corn is a type of maize. Ask learners if they have ever eaten *tortillas*. Explain that maize is also used for this. Ask learners if any of them eat beef. Explain that maize is also used as feed for cows, so by eating beef learners are indirectly eating maize. Challenge learners to think about whether they are therefore *connected* to the farmers who grow maize. *If so, how?*
- Show slide 8 of *Slideshow B* and tell learners they are going to play a game to help them to consider what the global food system is like for small-scale farmers that grow crops such as maize. Organise learners into groups of four and distribute the materials. Explain that learners are now farmers, living in a less economically developed country. They are making a living by growing food (maize) to eat and sell at a local market.
- Explain that each group must use the materials provided to create as many completed “crops” as they can in 10 minutes. Alternatively, this time period could be extended using one or more of the suggestions provided below.
- Tell learners that in order to complete a crop it must be drawn on and cut out of the blank paper to the same scale and size as the template. You may also wish to set a minimum “quality standard” for the crops produced, for example for the shape of the maize and the neatness of the colouring in. Learners can also cut out and colour in the crops in the template to add to their crop total.
- Explain that the group who produces the most crops wins the game. However, learners may have to cope with a change in circumstances during the game which may affect their ability to produce maize. Encourage learners to use their resources carefully and to think about how their group will work together effectively.

- Once the groups have started to “produce” crops, stop the game after five to ten minutes and give each group one of the five possible scenario sheets provided in *Group scenarios* (Activity sheet 2). Give learners time to read the scenarios and follow the instructions provided, then restart the game for a further five to ten minutes before ending the game.
- Alternatively, if more time is available, give each group one of the scenarios first, run the game for a further five to ten minutes, then provide an additional scenario and run the game again for an additional five to ten minutes. This step could be repeated to enable groups to experience a number of scenarios.
- Declare a winning team at the end of the game. This should be the group (or one of the groups) who experienced Scenario 4 or 5!
- To debrief, give learners some time as a whole class to talk about what it was like to be a small-scale farmer taking part in this global food system. Possible discussion questions include:
  - *What was it like being a small-scale farmer in the global food system?*
  - *What was challenging and why?*
  - *How did your group manage after the scenarios were introduced?*
  - *How did you work together to be successful?*
  - *How did these scenarios make you feel?*
  - *What was fair about the game, and what was unfair?*
- Explain that this game illustrates some of the challenges and inequalities that small-scale farmers face within the global food system. Draw out the different experiences and outcomes when the small-scale farmers were either supported (by the government in Scenario 4 or by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Scenario 5) or not supported (as in the other scenarios). Introduce the idea of *fairness*. Would the system be fairer if all small-scale farmers were supported?

## Differentiation

- *Make it easier: Give learners multiple copies of the Crop template (Activity sheet 1) to colour in and cut out crops rather than asking them to draw their own crops on blank paper.*

## Further ideas

- Show the film clip: *A snapshot of the broken food system in India* (2 min 39 sec): [www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=1\\_8oEWx1qzs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=1_8oEWx1qzs). What similar issues in the clip do learners recognise from the game? Extend the discussion by asking learners to think of five ways in which small-scale farmers could be supported and then share their ideas as a whole class. *Note: This film clip is also used in Session 6.*

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**Group Scenarios**

**Activity sheet 2a**

**Scenario 1 - Climate change**

*Background*

Global temperatures are rising owing to climate change. This means that some of your crops will die (yields will be lowered). In some countries in Africa, half of the crops could be lost. Most people believe that extreme weather like heat waves, droughts and floods will get worse and happen more often, and the growing season will become more unpredictable. This means that you won't be able to grow as much food.

*Action*

Your farmland is flooded and your crops are destroyed. When the floods subside, it takes you months to repair the damage and start producing crops again.

*What you must do*

Any crops you have completed in the game so far will be destroyed. You must sit on your hands for 30 seconds when the game re-starts.

**Scenario 2- Your land is bought by a wealthy company**

*Background*

Wealthy companies buy cheap farmland in poor countries. But sometimes the land they buy is actually being used by poor families to grow food. These families are often evicted (told to leave) with little or no warning, and they are not given very much money to make up for this. Sometimes the land is used to grow biofuel (these are plants that can be burned for energy) and sometimes the land is left so that the buyer can keep it to use later.

*Action*

Half of the land you farm has been bought by a large global food company and you are no longer allowed to farm it.

*What you must do*

Half of your remaining paper will be removed.

**Group Scenarios**

**Activity sheet 2b**

**Scenario 3 - Food price rises**

*Background*

The price of food is rising across the world and this affects the poorest people the most. This means that many families must spend up to 75% of their money every week just on food. If food prices change suddenly families cannot cope. Farmers who grow food to sell also need to buy food, so this affects them too.

*Action*

As a farmer, you can no longer afford to buy essential food that you cannot grow yourself. You don't have any savings so you must sell the things you need to farm, such as farming equipment, to have enough money to buy food.

*What you need to do*

Half of your scissors and pencils will be removed.

**Scenario 4 – Government Investment**

*Background*

There are 500 million small-scale farms across the world supporting two billion people. 80 per cent of hungry people live in rural areas, and most of them work on small-scale food farms.<sup>1</sup> Small-scale farmers have a big impact in the global food system. Governments can help small-scale farmers by providing money to help improve farming methods and so their yields (the amount grown) can go up.

*Action*

The government gives you a grant (money) to support your small farm. This means that you can buy some more machinery to help plant and harvest more crops.

*What you need to do*

You will receive an additional set of scissors, more pencils and paper.

<sup>1</sup>[policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2013/06/a-call-to-policy-makers-to-support-small-scale-agriculture](http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2013/06/a-call-to-policy-makers-to-support-small-scale-agriculture)

**Group Scenarios**

**Activity sheet 2c**

**Scenario 5 – NGO support**

*Background*

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Oxfam support small-scale farmers in long term development projects in rural areas. NGOs work with local communities to help set up co-operatives. This means that people in the community can share machinery and help each other to harvest their crops. They can also sell their crops together and share the profits.

*Action*

A local co-operative has been set up in your area. This means that you can borrow equipment from other farmers or share your equipment.

*What you need to do*

You will receive an additional set of scissors. You can share your equipment with another group (the group must also have *Scenario 5, NGO support*) or join together if you want to.