

Why Should Anyone Go Hungry?

Before choosing a food system, Human Baseline asks a smaller question: what is the good reason that preventable hunger should remain possible?

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Why Should Anyone Go Hungry?

The question before Human Baseline becomes a system

I do not mean hungry in the abstract. I mean somebody going to sleep knowing that tomorrow depends on a payment, a form, a good week at work, a charity queue, a family member, a working phone, a shop being open, or somebody else deciding that they are worth helping.

We are used to treating this as normal. Sometimes we call it bad luck. Sometimes we call it personal responsibility. Sometimes we say that the system is complicated, and then move on.

Human Baseline starts with a less comfortable question:

What is the good reason that this has to remain possible?

Human Baseline begins by specifying a human condition that should not be allowed to fail before it chooses the institution responsible for protecting it. That order matters. The question is not, at first, what is the most beautiful system, what political party gets credit, or who owns the farms, kitchens, warehouses and delivery vans.

It is this:

Why should a person be allowed to fall below food?

“Because somebody has to pay” is not yet an answer

Of course food has to be grown, moved, prepared and paid for. Someone works. Land and energy are used. Systems fail. Good intentions do not fill a plate.

But saying “somebody has to pay” does not answer the moral question. It only tells us that the thing needs an architecture. Most things we consider basic already have one. We do not ask a person having a heart attack whether their income was high enough to justify an ambulance, and we build roads without requiring every driver to negotiate the asphalt first.

Food is stranger. A person cannot participate in society without it, while access is still often treated as the final bargaining chip. For many people, enough money is what makes food reliably available. Lose the wrong job, miss the wrong payment, get sick, or get caught in a broken administrative process, and the floor beneath

you becomes less certain. That should need a better justification than habit.

A floor is not a life plan

Human Baseline does not say that everybody should eat the same food, that restaurants should disappear, or that farmers should be told what to grow by one distant office. It does not say markets are evil, or that people should stop making money, competing, importing food, cooking badly, buying expensive cheese or opening strange bakeries.

It says something smaller: there may be a difference between a market and a survival test. Markets can be useful for variation, quality, invention, taste, risk and choice. But if the alternative to accepting a transaction is hunger, that transaction carries more force than an ordinary choice.

A food floor would not make life equal. It would change the consequence of losing. People could still want better food, buy it, or refuse the baseline entirely. But basic survival would not have to be the price of saying no.

The Soviet question

This is where people may hear the word “baseline” and imagine the Soviet Union: a state deciding what exists, who receives it, what farmers produce, what a shop is allowed to sell and how much freedom remains after the plan is finished. That history is not irrelevant. It is one reason to be suspicious of any system that promises security while collecting too much control.

But it is also a way to avoid the actual question. There is a difference between saying that no person should be left without basic food and saying that one central authority should run every farm, kitchen, shop and human choice. The first is an obligation. The second is one possible architecture — and a bad default.

A baseline specifies an outcome before it specifies an operator.

A food floor could use public reserves, private producers, cooperatives, municipal kitchens, independent shops, contracts, local projects or a mixture that has not yet been designed. The delivery mechanism matters enormously. It should be inspectable, contestable and replaceable when it fails.

The baseline must not become a menu imposed on everyone, a reason to crush small producers, or a system where access to ordinary life depends on pleasing the people who run it. If the only way to prevent hunger is to make people less free, the proposal has not solved the problem. It has moved it. That is why the ownership question comes after the human question, but never disappears.

The market gets more interesting after survival

I do not want a world with fewer choices, fewer producers or fewer strange businesses. I want the opposite. If people do not have to spend every day playing the survival game, they may be able to play more interesting games above it.

They can take a risk on a small bakery, leave a bad employer, make a product that is useful to a small number of people, or start a workshop, a farm, a repair business, a kitchen or a local service. That is not less market. It may be a more real market.

When the price of refusing a bad deal is hunger, the market does not need to persuade people very hard. Removing hunger from the downside of refusal would change at least one source of bargaining pressure. It would move more competition above survival: towards pay, conditions, meaning, quality, price, trust or something genuinely new.

Human Baseline is therefore not an argument against capitalism in the simple sense. It is an argument against making survival the strongest bargaining chip inside it. The floor should be boring: reliable food, reliable shelter and reliable basics. Everything above it can become much less boring, with more producers, small experiments, local businesses, unusual choices and room to fail without being destroyed by one failure.

Automation does not answer access

A machine may one day grow the crop, identify disease, harvest it, move it through a warehouse and prepare the meal with far less required human labour. That could make food cheaper to provide. It still would not tell us who eats.

A harvesting robot is a production technology. It does not contain a theory of entitlement. The machine can change the cost of a baseline, but it cannot make the baseline a right unless people build the institution that makes it one. Automation is a capability question. Access is a governance question.

The serious objections are real

There are good reasons to distrust a large promise. A system can become bureaucratic, humiliating and expensive. It can become a new dependency, concentrate power in the hands of people who are not careful enough to hold it, or become a bad service that nobody can escape.

Those are not arguments to ignore. They are design requirements. If a food floor works only when every official is kind, requires people to perform their desperation in public, or fails because someone has no phone, a database is unavailable or one institution can quietly redefine the floor, it is weak.

If it cannot survive mistakes, local failure, bad weather or a change of government, it is weak. If it removes freedom rather than protecting the conditions under which freedom has meaning, it is weak. Human Baseline should not be protected from those criticisms. It should be built so they can hurt it.

The practical question comes after the moral one

This is where the food research begins: not with a promise that Denmark has solved hunger, but with a practical question. If we decided that nobody should be left without basic food, what would it physically take to make that true?

How much land, which crops and how much storage would it take? What happens when one crop fails? Can the system work when imports stop, a processor fails, software is unavailable or the weather is bad twice? What does it cost, and what parts should be public, private, cooperative, local or mixed?

Those questions are not details after the idea. They are the test of whether the idea deserves to exist. The Danish food work is testing whether a deliberately designed calorie floor is physically plausible enough to investigate seriously. That is not a deployment verdict, a complete diet or proof that one institution should run anything. It is permission to keep asking the harder questions with numbers, fields, warehouses and failure modes instead of slogans.

Why not?

Maybe there is a decisive reason people should still be able to go hungry in a society capable of preventing it. Maybe the cost is too high, the machinery would be more dangerous than the problem it tries to solve, a better approach already exists, or the food floor cannot be made robust without creating something worse.

Those would all matter. But the burden is to find them. They should not be assumed simply because hunger has been normal for a long time.

Normality is not evidence.

Human Baseline is not the claim that we already know how to build the right system. It is the refusal to accept “that is just how it is” as an answer before we have even investigated the alternatives.

— Dennis Hedegreen, still checking

RELATION MEMORY

NEARBY [Money Should Not Be the Door to Survival](#) · This article narrows the broader survival-access question to food and turns it into a research programme rather than a finished delivery model.

NEARBY [Do Not Build a Future Only Institutions Can Survive](#) · Both test institutions against the person who must live inside them; this article asks what that test means for food access.