



## Ten years ago, [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org)

### Ten years ago...

Ten years ago, a first article was published on the [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) website. It had to do with a new variety of paddy developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) that was adapted to phosphorus-poor soils.

This [short article \(in French\)](#), of only 234 words (title included) was drawing three lessons from the results of the work conducted by IRRI:

- It is possible to develop non-GMO varieties with higher yields that do not require the use of additional inputs
- Public research should be intended for developing technologies that can be made available to poor farmers. It must be encouraged and supported by appropriate resources, as it is proven that agricultural research is the most profitable investment in the field of agriculture.
- Preserving traditional varieties helps to protect genetic resources that might be crucial in the future.

These three conclusions remain valid today more than ever.

The future of our food - our future - will primarily depend on our capacity to develop technologies that are environment-friendly and accessible to the poorest producers, and on our determination to preserve the immense existing genetic resources (biodiversity) that are the basis of life.

Since the day of 22 August 2012, many other conditions to be respected to ensure our survival (ours and not that of the planet, for whom what humanity does, is irrelevant) have been mentioned on the site and they dealt as much with our way to produce as our way to consume, get organised, and more generally, to behave with each other,

In February 2013, a first article was published on [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org), the mirror website of [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) in English. It was wondering what the real number of hungry people in the world was [[read](#)], a theme regularly addressed later on the website.

### Objective

As stated on [one of the pages of the website](#), the goal of creating [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) (and later [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org)) was to build a site that would help “the honest citizens of the

21st century that we are, ... to better understand the world around us and act in order to change it”.

Starting from hunger and malnutrition - most probably the biggest current scandal in a world of plenty - the thinking carried out by [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) and [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org) was due to broaden with time, given the centrality of food in our lives and economy. Indeed, “Food is at the basis of our life. It is in the food we eat that we find the building blocks for our bodies and the energy required to conduct our daily activities” [[read](#)], “We are the food that we eat” [[read](#)], and securing our food has been, since time immemorial, at the centre of our concerns. Our relationship with food has largely determined our behaviour and our social interactions during history.

With the abundance that characterises the industrial world that developed over the last 150 years, humanity has somewhat forgotten the centrality of food and thus was induced to adopt attitudes that threaten its very existence. [Lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) and [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org) have therefore been led to broaden the scope of their concerns to include themes such as, for instance, [intergenerational equity](#) or [migrations](#), and to go beyond the analysis of the causes of hunger to deal with the general question of food systems across the world and other related topics.

The main interest in this undertaking, has always been to respect analytical strictness and be based on facts, credible data and scientifically established conclusions, and to work in full independence. For this, both websites ([lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) and [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org)) do not rely on any external source of funding and depend entirely on voluntary contributions.

## Structure

Almost immediately, two major types of articles appeared on the site. Besides [News](#) that, through short pieces, seek to keep readers informed on key events in the field of food and agriculture, there were feature articles, longer, more detailed and analytical, based on research work. These feature articles are grouped under the [Resources](#) category that has several subcategories.

In 2013, following the Lampedusa scandal and the Westgate drama in Nairobi, the decision was to give space to authors wishing to express their [opinion](#) regarding a food and agriculture-related question of particularly importance to them. Special mention goes to Andrew MacMillan and Jomo Kwame Sundaram whose articles, continuous support and encouragement are a major cause of the longevity of the websites. However, many more people contributed to and supported these websites, without whom [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) and [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org) would not be what they are. A list, incomplete, can be consulted at the bottom of the [front page](#).

As the material developed (there are nowadays around 400 articles in French and English, a dozen in Spanish thanks to Byron Ponce-Segura, and a few in Italian and Arabic - the latter being the object of a thesis in Jordan), it became increasingly difficult to readers to find their way on the sites, despite a not-so-user-friendly search engine. Hence the idea to create a new category, [Themes](#), where texts grouped according to approximately forty topics can be found. One of these themes is presented every week on the front page. In addition, each article mentions other pieces available on the site dealing with the same

topic (or a similar subject) and suggests external references, to allow readers who would wish so, to go into greater depth.



## Visitors

If anyone had told me, back in 2012, that [lafaimexpliquee.org](http://lafaimexpliquee.org) and [hungerexplained](http://hungerexplained.com) would be visited more than 500,000 times in ten years, and that readers would make more than 21 million hits, I would have considered this forecast with great scepticism, as it is quite evident that reading articles on these sites is a much more demanding task than to browse through tweets and watch video clips on cats or dances on TikTok.

This is, however, what actually happened!

By far, it is the feature article on food security, available in four languages, that has been most consulted: more than 100,000 reads and more than 70,000 downloads (by the way, this piece would need some updating)! I have even been told that some of the articles are used by teachers in high schools and in universities...

Visits to the site have been increasing regularly between 2012 and 2019, then stabilised in 2020 and followed a rather sharp decrease between 2020 and 2021 that appears to be confirmed in 2022 at a level of around 50,000 visits and little more than 2 million hits per annum. The reduced traffic can probably be put at least in part on the account of a lower activity on the site (see below) because of my other activities (school conferences, teaching, participation in a major FAO study in 2021/2022 and writing of several novels since 2015, the last being "Vengeances Romaines", a police fun piece in French that should be available soon and is staged in Rome, mostly within FAO Headquarters...).

## Level of activity

The table below shows the annual level of activity of the website.

## Level of activity

Years	News	Feature articles	Opinions	Total
2012	24	11		35
2013	80	10	3	93
2014	44	4	2	50
2015	29	5	2	36
2016	21	1	1	23
2017	23	3	11	37
2018	17	5	2	24
2019	28	2	5	35
2020	18	2	6	26
2021	12	3	11	26
2022	5	6	4	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>400</b>

It shows a rather strong investment phase in 2012 and 2013 during which several feature unpublished feature articles drafted in 2011 were accounted for, then a cruising level with around 20 news per year (with considerable variation), a constant flow of feature articles (some being updates of older pieces), with a peak in 2022 (linked to research conducted in the framework of my activities with FAO in 2021/2022), and a noteworthy growth of external contributions to “Opinions”.

### Prospects

A priori, the intention is to maintain the flow of news and opinion pieces at a steady pace and to update some of the feature articles that are becoming outdated, while addressing important additional topics linked to food and agriculture.

I am quite open to readers’ suggestions and proposals, and would be delighted to broaden the group of authors published under “Opinions”. Collaborations for drafting feature articles on new subjects are also welcome.

Thank you all for your encouragement and support.

[Materne Maetz](#)  
(22 August 2022)