

Correspondence

COVID-19: LMICs need antivirals as well as vaccines

In the battle against COVID-19, there must be global equity in the distribution of antiviral drugs such as molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir. These are potent public-health tools beyond disease mitigation and vaccination (see, for example, *Nature* **601**, 165; 2022). Cheap and easy to use, these pills are well suited to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In under-vaccinated LMICs, widespread access to antiviral drugs is crucial. Antivirals could be a more enduring defence against emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants than are vaccines and monoclonal antibodies. They have the potential to prevent hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and deaths globally. However, LMICs currently face significant manufacturing and pricing obstacles, and high-income countries have bought much of the existing supply (see go.nature.com/3nfnz).

Production of these antivirals must be rapidly scaled up through compulsory licensing, the US Defense Production Act and other strategies (see go.nature.com/3kcxkga). Issues of supply, demand and cost can all be addressed readily, in tandem with vaccine equity, to achieve global pill equity.

Simar Singh Bajaj Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Fatima Cody Stanford Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
fstanford@mgh.harvard.edu

Emissions cuts take political and social innovation, too

Your Editorial makes no mention of the pivotal role of societal support in combating global warming (*Nature* **601**, 7; 2022). As has become clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is naive to assume that new technologies and scientific recommendations will be unequivocally embraced by policymakers and the public. Fighting climate change will depend crucially on people's support for the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

It has long been known that changes in behaviour could help to limit greenhouse-gas emissions (see, for example, T. Dietz *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* **106**, 18452–18456; 2009). The challenge now lies in improving public engagement with policies that will reduce emissions sufficiently (S. van der Linden and E. U. Weber *Curr. Opin. Behav. Sci.* **42**, iii–viii; 2021). Strategies could include emphasizing scientific consensus and local climate impacts, as well as leveraging social norms and peer-to-peer influence to change transport, diets and energy consumption at scale.

Decision-making and behaviour from boardroom to ballot box are key to effective solutions to the climate-change crisis. Let us not forget this when setting research and policy agendas.

Jonas De keersmaecker,
Katharina Schmid Esade Business School, Barcelona-Sant Cugat, Spain.

Sander van der Linden University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.
sander.vanderlinden@psychol.cam.ac.uk

FAO should focus on real not nominal food prices

The latest report from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations risks conveying an overly optimistic interpretation of global food security to the press and the public when it concludes that, although nominal food prices grew by more than 28% between 2020 and 2021, they remain below their 2012 peak (see go.nature.com/3rrojmc). This is not the case for 'real' food prices, which take inflation factors into account. I argue that focusing on real, rather than nominal, food prices is a better indicator of food accessibility.

The FAO's 'real' food price index shows a steep increase that coincides with supply-chain problems and other issues during the COVID-19 pandemic (see go.nature.com/3fv199q). Moreover, the real international price of food is currently the highest it has been since the oil crisis of the 1970s (see go.nature.com/3fv1yte).

In my view, a greater emphasis on real prices would more effectively communicate the severity of our growing nutritional crisis. It would accelerate action against food inaccessibility, helping to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of reaching zero hunger, and would improve global nutritional standards (see go.nature.com/3lwup95).

Alastair M. Smith University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.
a.smith.21@warwick.ac.uk

Early-career satisfaction: industry beats academia

Your conclusion that industry scores higher than academia for job satisfaction (*Nature* **600**, 8; 2021) doesn't factor in how this can vary at different career stages. Inspection of the raw data from the *Nature*-sponsored survey (see go.nature.com/3eqc) indicates that dissatisfaction is highest among young scientists in academia. Greater financial and institutional support is essential to help this group to overcome their difficulties. It would also be an investment in the future.

For example, the proportion of high-income early-career researchers (those earning US\$110,000 or more per year) is more than 5 times higher in industry than in academia, as compared with less than twice as high for senior scientists. There is also a large gap in satisfaction over job security for early-career researchers (73% for those in industry versus 39% in academia), which narrows rapidly by the mid-career stage (62% versus 56%). A similar pattern emerges for researchers' attitudes towards career-advancement opportunities (for details, see go.nature.com/3nkr).

These differences highlight the uncertainty that bedevils early-career scientists in academia, including low pay for postdoctoral training, intense competition for assistant professorships, and dwindling research grants. These difficulties can be tackled – for example, a generous Chinese funding programme enables outstanding young scientists returning from abroad to choose their research direction (see go.nature.com/3rus; in Chinese).

Shusheng Geng Soochow University, Suzhou, China.
gssgjy@suda.edu.cn