



Will Elon Musk Give Up 2% of His Wealth to Solve World Hunger? Here's Why the World Shouldn't Hold its Breath

Description

Between becoming the wealthiest man on the planet to selling Tesla stock to deal with lawsuits, Musk's name has been everywhere this month. But one story that's top of mind for the world's philanthropists is surely the U.N. food program director David Beasley's **Twitter**-challenge to the American billionaire: give the World Food Programme (WFP) US\$6.6 billion, and the WFP will solve world hunger.

Musk wasted no time in responding. "If WFP can describe on this Twitter thread," Musk wrote, "exactly how \$6B will solve world hunger, I will sell **Tesla** stock right now."

Well, David Beasley has finally laid out his plan. Will it convince Musk to donate US\$6.6 billion? I doubt it. Here's why.

The WFP's plan

David Beasley's plan to spend US\$6.6 billion is fairly simple.

First, the WFP would allocate US\$3.5 billion to buy food and deliver it directly to more than 40 million people across 43 countries. This would help provide immediate relief to those on the brink of famine. The WFP would then give US\$2 billion in cash and food vouchers, both of which can be used to purchase food at select stores.

Another US\$700 million would be used to manage new food programs, which would help UN officials ensure food reaches the most vulnerable in a country. Finally, the last US\$400 million would be used for operations management, all the fees and wages that pay for administration and accountability within the supply chain.

Will Musk do it?

I'd love to see Musk donate US\$6.6 billion to the WFP. But I have my doubts.

For one, Musk's "challenge" was either laziness on his part or just showboating for his Twitter fans and the media. That's because the WFP has never been opaque about how they use their money. All you have to do is read through last year's annual permanence report, and you'd get a good sense of where the WFP channels donations and why.

Secondly, Musk has already made grandiose promises that, so far, haven't come true. Just take the pledge he made in 2012 to donate at least half of his fortune. It's 2021, and Musk has reportedly donated less than 1% of his total net worth. If we take US\$300 billion as a starting point, Musk would have to donate US\$150 billion to meet that pledge. With that money, he could make a US\$6 billion donation to the WFP 25 times.

Let's not forget, too, that Musk isn't exactly swimming in cash. He's the world's wealthiest man, sure, but he's notoriously cash-poor. Nearly all of his wealth is tied to Tesla and SpaceX, which is why he would have to sell Tesla stock to donate to the WFP. Will he do that? Probably not.

Finally, Musk doesn't appear convinced that the U.N. as an organization is worthy of his donation. In a separate thread, Musk tweeted a link to an article that accused U.N. officials of "looking the other way," as peacekeepers in Central African Republic abused children. "What happened there," Musk commented, tagging David Beasley.

Digging up dirt on an organization that's asking you for US\$6.6 billion isn't exactly a promising sign.

But let me finish with this: Musk has been known to surprise everyone. Sometimes the surprises aren't exactly virtuous. But sometimes they are. Musk might blindside everyone and sell enough Tesla stock to cover the US\$6.6 billion donation. But the world, especially those struggling to eat, shouldn't hold its breath.

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