



Expert Group Meeting on Progress in Achieving SDG 2 in preparation for the 2017 HLPF

12-13 June 2017
UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), is organizing an expert group meeting (EGM) on progress in achieving SDG 2, from 12 to 13 June 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York. The EGM is being convened in preparation for the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which will take place from 10 to 19 July 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York under the theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 2 calls for us to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture” by 2030. It commits Governments and others to ensure universal access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times of the year. Achieving this objective requires a holistic approach that encompasses productive support and social protection systems, as well as partnerships, multi-stakeholder participation and inclusive governance. Ensuring the food security and nutritional status of vulnerable people, including displaced and conflict-affected populations, will require commitment by Governments and other stakeholders to “*leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first*”.

Ensuring food security and nutrition also requires that food systems and agricultural practices become more sustainable, resilient and inclusive; ensuring that all have equal access to land and water, markets, technology adapted to local contexts, and social protection. Responsible public and private investments in infrastructure and technology to boost agricultural productivity and capacity building are also needed. Investment in integrated food access and agriculture development must be accompanied by coordinated action at both national and subnational levels, across ministries and departments as well as across rural and urban jurisdictions.

Linking sustainable agriculture to poverty eradication is crucial to ensuring food security and enhancing the livelihoods of rural poor people—who are highly concentrated in degraded and natural resource-poor environments—and restoring, safeguarding, developing and promoting sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. Nearly 80 percent of the world’s population suffering from extreme poverty lives in rural areas, and most are food insecure. Promoting and supporting sustainable agriculture helps to overcome poverty and food insecurity, promotes sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers, and can serve as a driver for the achievement of all SDGs. Agricultural growth, however, will not rapidly reduce poverty on its own.

To sustainably increase the productive capacity of agriculture, and double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, more “pro-poor”, responsible investment is needed from both public and private sources, as well as from both domestic and foreign sources, responding to the needs of family farmers and poor rural populations, including productive support and social protection components of an integrated farm and food policy that builds on local knowledge and practices.

The recognition of the environment and ecosystems as “stakeholders” in our economic system is an underlying principle of sustainable food systems, as is the need to recognize the large and important contributions of ecosystem services. The primary stewards of ecosystem functions, including healthy soil and clean water that maintain arable lands worldwide, are family farmers and small-scale food producers, including forest managers, fisherfolk and pastoralists, a majority of whom are women. Promoting effective, sustainable agricultural practices is increasingly urgent given the need to adapt to climate change, which can exacerbate conditions for poor people and have devastating effects on national efforts to ensure food security.

Achieving SDG 2 in countries in special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS) and in protracted crisis presents specific challenges that need to be addressed, related to insufficient or degraded natural resources, logistics hurdles to ensure access to food, and conflict. The scale and complexity of the food security crises caused by conflict and natural disasters have increased dramatically in recent years and represent a significant threat to sustainable development. A range of underlying causes must be addressed to reduce the risk for food security crises.

Objectives, structure and topics

The Expert Group Meeting will bring together a diverse group of experts and stakeholders in an interactive dialogue to assess progress achieved in reaching the targets of SDG 2, identify challenges at the national and international levels, and produce key political messages and policy recommendations in advance of the HLPF. The experiences of Member States will be featured throughout the meeting, providing a basis for reviewing national progress against SDG 2 targets.

To achieve these objectives, the workshop will have a duration of two days. Day one of the workshop will be comprised of a day of plenary presentations and discussions on SDG targets 2.1 to 2.5 looking at progress towards the target, the major challenges, and the way forward. Day two of the workshop will consist of parallel discussions on means of implementation including partnerships, interlinkages, and countries in special situations and protracted crisis.

Participation

Experts from Governments, the United Nations system and other international organizations, the scientific community, civil society, the private sector, academia and farmer representatives, from both developed and developing countries, will be invited to participate in the meeting.

Expected Outcome

The meeting’s conclusions will be summarized in an outcome document that will inform the 2017 HLPF on progress in implementing SDG 2, including key political messages and policy guidance for countries on what is needed to accelerate the implementation of SDG 2 and achieve its targets.

Briefing

A briefing to present the outcome of the expert group meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 June from 1:15 to 2:30pm in Conference Room 1. All interested member States, stakeholders and UN system representatives are invited to attend.