



Global governance of food security



THE CHALLENGE

Global food and nutrition security has deteriorated and continues to represent a serious threat to national and international peace and security. Today more than 1 billion people suffer from chronic hunger, representing 15 percent of the world's population. Of those, about 150 million have joined the ranks of hungry people due to the combined effects of soaring food prices and the global financial and economic crisis. However, hunger has been on the rise even during periods of low food prices and healthy economic growth. The presence of such high levels of hunger, malnutrition and poverty in the face of increasing global wealth and food abundance, and the inability to protect vulnerable people from the effects of crises, points to a serious need for reform of the global food security governance.

The world agricultural system and the resources it draws upon also need urgent attention. Unless purposeful action is taken now, the future performance of the world agricultural system will not be commensurate with the increased demands for food, fibre and fuel. Growth in agricultural productivity is slowing with the rate of growth in yields of major cereal crops declining steadily from 3.2 percent in 1960 to 1.5 percent in 2000. And yet, having to feed 9.1 billion people in 2050, most of whom will be located in urban areas, will require an

increase in agricultural production by 70 percent from the average of 2005–2007 triennium. Demands for bioenergy, which may divert food and feed crops to biofuel production, and the associated price effects can threaten food security. Unless action is taken to develop new technology and increase productivity, diversion of resources to biofuel production may result in severe difficulties in feeding *everyone* adequately. The long- and short-term effects of climate change will present further challenges to agricultural production and food and nutrition security. The aggregate negative impact of climate change on African agricultural output is estimated to be between 15 and 30 percent by 2080–2100. Trends in public investment for agriculture in critical sectors such as research, extension, infrastructure and biodiversity are seriously lagging behind. It is obvious that a more coherent and effective response is required to address challenges of such magnitude at the global level.

REFORMING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION

Global governance of food security refers to a mechanism that will facilitate debate, convergence of views and coordination of actions to improve food security at global but also at regional and national levels. This concept was first introduced at the turn of the 20th century when the League of Nations

recognized the need for some form of multilateral world food security arrangement. It was not until the FAO and the UN were created in 1945 that a vision of world food security extending beyond the bounds of nations or regions was articulated.

High level political summits, such as the UN World Food Conference in Rome in September 1974, the International Conference on Nutrition in 1992 and the World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002, endeavoured to create the foundations of an international governance system for food security. Commitments were made to combat hunger and food insecurity and structures were created within the UN system to address food and nutrition security.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was created in 1974 following the World Food Conference to serve as the intergovernmental body within the UN system to review and follow up policies and programmes concerning world food security. As an intergovernmental mechanism, the CFS is universal. It is open to all Member Nations of FAO and Member States of the United Nations and to representatives of other international organizations, NGOs, civil society and the private sector. In 1996, the CFS was charged by the World Food Summit (WFS) with the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the WFS Plan of Action.

However, the leadership required to make substantial and rapid progress towards global food security was not successful, partly due to the prolonged neglect by governments of the underlying causes of hunger, and partly due to lack of coherence and convergence among policies and programmes of countries, donors and other stakeholders.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Over the last few years, especially in the wake of soaring food prices and the global economic and financial crisis, widespread concerns about food and nutrition security have been raised. Renewed political attention has been given to world food security and its governance with the intention to address both the effects of crises, but more importantly, the long-term, structural factors that contribute to hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Pledges to increase resources devoted to agriculture and food security especially in those countries most in need have been renewed. The progressive realization of the right to food has been considered in various fora as an important over-arching framework for food security.

A number of national and regional efforts (policies and programmes) have been developed through a participatory process to promote food and nutrition security at national and sub-national levels and a conducive policy framework for growth of agriculture. Existing and emerging regional and sub-regional responses (such as NEPAD/CAADP and Latin America *sin hambre*) promote integration, coherence and consistency of national level efforts. The drive for greater policy and

implementation coherence is also evident in the efforts of donor coordination through the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. The International Alliance against Hunger (IAAH) was established after the World Food Summit: *five years later* as a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder mechanism to capitalize on experiences and reinforce initiatives at the national level.

In response to the devastating impact of high food and fuel prices on global food security, the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was created in April 2008 to promote a comprehensive and unified response by UN bodies by facilitating the creation of a prioritized plan of action and coordinating its implementation at national level. At the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy (FAO, June 2008) and the G8+ Summit in Japan (July 2008, Tokyo Declaration) concrete proposals were made for the creation of a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food. This was reaffirmed at the Madrid High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All (January 2009), where the Food Security and Nutrition were added to the calls for a global partnership. These proposals were further discussed at the FAO Conference in November 2008, at the G8+ L'Aquila Summit in July 2009 and at the G8 Summit in Pittsburgh in September 2009.

In July 2009, the G8+ Summit in Italy gave rise to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative where those present committed themselves towards a goal of mobilizing USD 21 billion over three years to improve agriculture and food security in a more coordinated, comprehensive manner. Since then a

number of meetings within the context of The Road from L'Aquila have been held with concerned international bodies and donors to prepare a systematic approach to translate L'Aquila commitments into concrete plans and practical steps.

In addressing fundamental concerns over food security and nutrition, these initiatives have called for a new design of the governance of world food security, building on and reforming existing institutions, and strengthened partnerships. The functions of the organizations addressing agriculture and food security need to be realigned, strengthened and coordinated to meet new and emerging challenges.

These initiatives have led to partial solutions toward coherence and convergence (e.g. coherence among UN agencies or groups of countries like the G8). However, it is evident that greater coherence in the global governance of food security is still needed to encourage convergence of policies and actions taken by *all stakeholders*. The latter include governments, concerned national and international institutions, civil society groups such as producer and consumer organizations and other key players in the global food system. The role of the private sector should not be underestimated, as well as the food industry, which has large research and development capacity and extensive supply chains and market penetration. Working together, these stakeholders can contribute more effectively towards eliminating chronic hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and preventing future food security crises from occurring.

TOWARDS A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP: THE REFORMED COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

The most recent and promising initiative to strengthen coordination and partnerships to combat hunger and food and nutrition insecurity is the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The reform package, which was approved by CFS members on 17 October 2009, aims to make CFS "... a central component of the evolving Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition [that will constitute] the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings."

The recently concluded reform of the CFS presents a unique opportunity to improve governance. And with the involvement of relevant consultation mechanisms at national level, it provides a basis for an effective and efficient global partnership on agriculture and food security. Features of the renewed CFS include:

- ▶ *Successful global coordination* of effort to eliminate hunger and ensure food security for all. This includes supporting national anti-hunger plans and initiatives; ensuring that all relevant voices are heard in the policy debate on food and agriculture; strengthening linkages at regional, national and local levels; and basing decisions on scientific evidence and state of the art knowledge.

- ▶ *Inclusion*: give voice and effective roles to a wider range of organizations working with food security and nutrition from UN agencies like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and other UN bodies. The CGIAR Centres, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and regional development institutions will also be involved, as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations. The Committee shall also be open to representatives of private sector associations and philanthropic foundations. A fundamental ingredient in food security governance will be stronger partnerships and alliances among all major stakeholders, at all levels.

- ▶ *Sound scientific base*: receive high-level scientific advice from a *High-Level Panel of Experts* on food security and nutrition and related subjects. This will ensure that the policy-making bodies are provided with the best scientific and knowledge-based analysis towards more effective solutions to ending hunger. Creating structural links between knowledge-experts and decision-making bodies is essential in effectively combating hunger and poverty.

- ▶ *A platform for discussion and coordination*: greater policy convergence including through the development of international strategies and voluntary guidelines on food security and nutrition based on best practices and lessons learned from countries who have succeeded in reducing hunger, will be

promoted. Countries and regions should be able facilitated in seeking assistance to address how hunger and malnutrition can be reduced more quickly and effectively.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A number of policy considerations will have to be faced as the reformed CFS is implemented, and as the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition takes shape. These could include:

How can one ensure that food security governance is effective?

With the building blocks of reform in place, improving global food security governance implies greater integration and coordination of reform initiatives horizontally (among countries, organizations, relevant stakeholders, etc.) and vertically (from local to global levels). The challenge is how to facilitate and accelerate such integration and guarantee that the ongoing reform in practice effectively serves the fight against food insecurity on the ground.

How can food security be embedded in national development priorities?

Hunger reduction policies are not just for better management of food and agricultural systems in times of crisis; they need to be fully integrated into national development priorities and strategies including social protection programmes. Hunger reduction objectives should feed into other global and regional programmes to make sure that food security issues are properly addressed (for example for trade and climate change negotiations, economic agreements etc.). Sustainable responses to the crises and increased resilience of food systems require priority to be given to local approaches.

How can emergencies and long-term assistance be better balanced?

There has been a tendency for short-term emergency food and agricultural aid to increase and for long-term assistance in strengthening public goods to decrease.

What is the proper balance between short-term emergency response and long-term assistance so that emergencies are limited?

How can improved global governance enable donors and implementing agents to ensure long-term aid in strengthening human and institutional capacity in developing countries is properly addressed?

How can food security governance be flexible and responsive to meet evolving challenges?

Contemporary causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are sometimes different from those faced during previous food crises. They are also likely to change as globalization spreads and accelerates, and as population growth decreases and urbanisation increases. The new governance system should be inclusive, considerate of members' views, flexible and able to mobilize political consensus, scientific expertise and financial and other resources as needed.

For further information



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