



28.09.2016

## PRESS RELEASE

### **United Nations in Hohenheim: Experts identify research priorities for sustainable global nutrition**

**Concerted action is needed to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030. This message emerged clearly from an international meeting of 200 scientists and experts at the University of Hohenheim. Two weeks before World Food Day, participants discussed with the panel of experts advising the United Nations (UN) Committee of World Food Security about research gaps and innovation strategies to ensure global food and nutrition security.**

Malnutrition and the rapid increase in nutrition-related illnesses, massive rural exodus, climate change and growing scarcity of natural resources – these are some of the challenges that science needs to face squarely. In addition, more than 795 million people in the world still suffer from hunger because they have little or no access to land, production inputs or income. There is controversy about the best approaches and strategies to solve these problems.

According to Prof. Dr Regina Birner from the Institute for Agricultural Sciences in the Tropics and Subtropics at the University of Hohenheim, “Even if we all agree on the goal, the pathways towards it are much debated in science and policy.” There is agreement about the need for sustainable intensification of agricultural production. “But will high-technology production or modes of agriculture closer to nature be more effective to attain this? There is no agreement about this yet.”

### **Identifying issues for the Committee on World Food Security**

During the colloquium on 27 September in Hohenheim, the 200 scientists and experts formulated concrete research priorities that would contribute to the global research agenda: nutrition security in times of war and conflict, sustainable food consumption, the link with climate change and loss of biodiversity. These topics can no longer be addressed only by national research programmes; they demand a global research agenda with more urgency than ever before.

The Chair of the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), Dr Patrick Caron, has researched these topics for many years. He sees the results of the Hohenheim colloquium as a contribution to the future workplan of the CFS. In a one-year consultation process, the HLPE is defining the critical and emerging issues for global food security. “Science can help policy promote change towards sustainable food systems.”

### **Holistic approach needed**

Alicia Kolmans, Managing Director of the Research Centre for Global Food Security and Ecosystems at the University of Hohenheim, stated: "Attaining global food security is a meta-challenge that we have to address with a view to the whole, working across all disciplines."

For example, what people eat depends on the interplay between soil, water and climate, but also terms of trade, distribution of income, consumer behaviour and food culture. To be able to provide all people with adequate and healthy food, the problems cannot be addressed in isolation from each other.

The colloquium participants stressed that scientists from different disciplines need to work much more closely together. They called for greater support to applied research oriented to the needs of the people directly affected. Intensive collaboration is therefore needed also between research and practice.

### **Integrate local and scientific knowledge**

A speaker from the Philippines, Esther Penunia, heads the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development. This association brings together 17 farmer organisations in 13 Asian countries and represents about 12 million small-scale farmers. Ms Penunia knows well the problems that farmers face; she pointed out that "especially very small-scale farmers are the ones who suffer most from hunger". She underlined the importance of involving these farmers in research from an early stage and in a genuine way.

As an expert in rural development, she asked researchers to adapt their way of doing research to the needs of such farmers. "We have to get away from mere transfer of technology to rather engaging in joint innovation. Sustainable development requires the knowledge inputs of all actors."

### **BACKGROUND: The UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the High-Level Panels of Experts (HLPE)**

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is a governing body of the United Nations (UN). It is the central international platform for developing strategies to combat hunger in the world. It was set up in 1974 and radically reformed in 2009. Today, it is an institution that enjoys broad international acceptance and includes representatives from governments, multilateral agencies, the private sector and civil society. The CFS serves as a model of a participatory approach to governance.

The High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) is an advisory body of the CFS that provides independent scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice. The results and recommendations of this panel lay the basis for policy discussions in the CFS.

### **BACKGROUND: UN body consults with scientists and civil society**

The colloquium is a building block in an international consultation of the HLPE to identify critical and emerging issues to be addressed by the UN Committee on World Food Security. The consultation draws on the knowledge and opinion of not only scientists but also other stakeholders, including the interested public. Organisations, interest groups and individuals can bring their issues into the consultation until the (extended) deadline of 31 October 2016. The CFS will summarise the results of the consultation and discuss them in

the coming year in order to derive its new programme of work (see <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/en/>).

### **BACKGROUND: Agenda 2030**

The Agenda 2030 comprises the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations that were newly defined in 2015: 17 goals for sustainable social, economic and ecological development that the global community wants to reach by 2030. These include ending hunger and poverty, as well as achieving gender equity, secure access to water, clean energy and biodiversity protection. The topic of food security is closely linked to several of the goals. Indicators have also been set for defining when a goal has been reached (see [http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment\(sustainable-development-goals/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment(sustainable-development-goals/)).

### **BACKGROUND: Research Centre for Global Food Security and Ecosystems at the University of Hohenheim**

Global food security is one of three research emphases of the University of Hohenheim. The Research Centre for Global Food Security and Ecosystems (GFE) at the University of Hohenheim links research topics such as sustainable agriculture production systems, food quality and availability, access to markets as well as food processing, storage and utilisation. Development-oriented agricultural research is a special focus of the Centre.

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