



Launch of the HLPE Report Water for Food Security and Nutrition

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Per Pinstrup-Andersen
HLPE Chairperson

Opening statement

Thank you Madam Chair,

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to share with you the 9th HLPE report, this one on Water for Food Security and Nutrition. You requested this report in October 2013 and we release it today to serve as a starting point to your debates.

Water and food are the two most fundamental basic needs of humans. Water is key to human food security and nutrition. The importance of water for life, for economic development and for food security makes it one of the most debated issues, with a range of challenges, stakes, and, very often conflicts. It is also one of the most complex within very diverse national and local contexts.

A debate on water, food security and nutrition is very timely. This year, the international community will agree on its Sustainable Development Agenda for the years to come. Water and Food Security are two of the most prominent issues. They are also two of the most transversal ones, conditioning the success of many of the other objectives. But there is a need to know what should be done, and what each actor should do to achieve the goals.

The report aims to respond to two generally accepted premises:

- 1) Safe drinking water and sanitation are fundamental to good nutrition, health and dignity for all. According to the most recent data from WHO and UNICEF, 2.5 billion people still lack improved sanitation facilities, and 768 million still rely on unsafe drinking water sources. This is fundamentally undermining social and economic development.

- 2) Water of sufficient quantity and quality is essential for agricultural production and for the preparation and processing of food. Irrigated agriculture accounts for 70 percent of all water withdrawals globally and 40 percent of irrigation water comes from groundwater sources, some of them nonrenewable. Ensuring FSN for all in an environment of scarce water resources in many regions and increasing competition for water is a very serious challenge.

Given these challenges, the report depicts the pathways between water and food security and nutrition and proposes ways for all concerned actors:

- to improve water management,
- to improve management of agricultural and food systems for water,
- and to improve water governance for FSN.

As further detailed by my colleagues in a few minutes, our analysis highlights the main domains for action and provides a foundation for context-specific policies and other interventions. We identified the following 8 policy domains:

- 1) Ensure sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems for the continued availability, quality and stability of water for FSN;
- 2) Ensure an integrated approach to water and FSN related policies;
- 3) Prioritise the most vulnerable and marginalised, including mainstreaming gender and addressing the specific needs of women;
- 4) Improve water management in agriculture and adapt agricultural systems to improve their overall water efficiency and water productivity, and their resilience to water stresses;
- 5) Improve the contribution of trade to “water for FSN”;
- 6) Devise and share enhanced knowledge, technologies and management tools related to water for FSN;
- 7) Foster an inclusive and effective governance of water for FSN;
- 8) Promote a rights-based approach to governance of water for FSN.

I wish to recognize the persons who contributed to this report, including:

- My Steering Committee colleagues and specially Michel Pimbert who led the Steering Committee’s work on this report,
- The Project Team, and especially the Project Team Leader, Lyla Mehta.
- The external peer reviewers
- A very large number of experts and institutions who commented extensively both on the terms of reference and on a first draft of the report.
- Finally warm thanks the HLPE Secretariat, in particular Vincent Gitz, for the tremendous contributions and support to this report and all our other work.
- Last but not least, I would like to thank the resource partners who fund the work of the HLPE.

Safeguarding water for the dignity, health, food and nutrition security of everyone on the planet is one of humanity’s biggest challenges. My colleagues Maryam and Lyla will present the main findings and recommendations. It is then up to all of us to take appropriate action.

Thank you for your attention.