



Global
Forum
on Food Security
and Nutrition

The Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition

Online discussions
that make a difference





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Visit the FSN Forum website at:

www.fao.org/fsnforum

For further information contact:

FSN-moderator@fao.org

This publication was prepared with the support of the project "Coherent Food Security Responses: Incorporating Right to Food into Global and Regional Food Security Initiatives" funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

Foreword

by Ann Tutwiler



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Knowledge is the critical tool in the fight against hunger and poverty, and I believe that it is in the sharing of knowledge that we may discover the difference between winning and losing this fight. As an organization, FAO has always recognized the importance of knowledge and information to its mission: knowledge is explicitly recognized within our core functions and, since 2005, we have defined ourselves as a Knowledge Organization. Knowledge management, knowledge sharing and information exchange are central to all areas of our work.

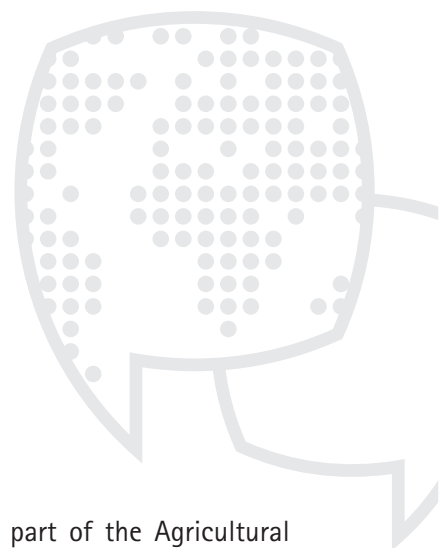
The FAO Knowledge Strategy published in 2011 builds on this foundation, and – more concretely – on FAO's comparative advantages as a multidisciplinary integrator, convener and neutral forum for world class knowledge in food and agriculture. We have a unique and fundamental role to play in enabling and facilitating the generation of knowledge, and in ensuring its easy access and exchange.

The Global Forum for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum) demonstrates the power of this role, and so it is my pleasure to present this special publication, which showcases the depth, diversity and excellence in knowledge sharing that it has achieved in recent years. Indeed, the FSN Forum reflects many of the key principles of the FAO Knowledge Strategy: in its relevance to both policy and programme work, in its multi-disciplinary scope and global perspective, and in its use of appropriate and flexible technologies to enable and connect people in the context of shared goals and objectives.

But I see the FSN Forum as much more than a model for knowledge management and sharing in global development. It is proof of what happens when you bring together key actors from all levels and sectors, for a facilitated and open exchange of views, and for true collaboration and teamwork on the challenges that matter most to them – in short, when you “do knowledge sharing right” – you make a difference.

Ann Tutwiler
FAO Deputy Director-General (Knowledge)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Ann Tutwiler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light grey horizontal line.



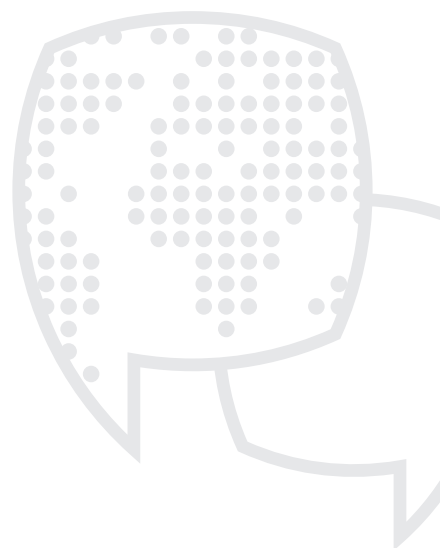
Acknowledgements

This publication was prepared by the FSN Forum Team, which is part of the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) of FAO. The FSN Forum Team operates under the overall leadership of Mark Smulders (ESA Programme Coordinator), and is comprised of Mauricio Rosales (FSN Forum Coordinator); Renata Mirulla and Max Blanck (FSN Forum Moderators); and Daniela Verona (FSN Forum Designer). Writing and editorial support for the publication were provided by Andi Shiraz.

Each part of the publication benefitted from the collaboration and input of others. For Part One, Huyen Tran and Mark Smulders provided overall background and history on the early days of the FSN Forum; and Gauri Salokhe provided valuable guidance in the context of knowledge management and sharing. For Parts Two and Three, the review and revision process was greatly enhanced through key comments and suggestions from Mark Gibson and Mark Smulders (for the chapter on Current Food Security Concepts); Melina Archer, Jennie Dey de Pryck, Johanna Lindstrom, Hajnalka Petrics and Susanne Turrall (for Women in Agriculture); Marco Knowles and Giorgia Nicoló (Street Foods); Winnie Bell and Shaheen Chughtai (Food Security in Protracted Crisis); Estibalitz Morras Dimas, Ralph Sims and Peter Steele (Agricultural Technologies & Innovation); Vincent Gitz (Climate Change and Food Security and Towards the HLPE Reports); Solomon Asfaw (Social Protection); Chiara Cirulli, Hartwig de Haen and Andrew MacMillan (Global Governance for Food Security); Mark McGuire, Cordelia Salter and Julian Thomas (The CFS Global Strategic Framework); Elisa Pozzi (A Catalyst for Change); Jean Balié (A Meeting Space for Methodology); and Yon Fernandez De Larrinoa and Winston Rudder (Civil Society Conversations).

In addition, Luisa Candido and Sophie Mardahl provided feedback and review for specific chapters and for the publication as a whole. Daniela Verona and Tomaso Lezzi ensured overall formatting, layout and visual consistency. Michelle Kendrick provided invaluable advice and guidance on editorial approach and publishing processes.

Lastly, the FSN Forum Team would like to acknowledge the generous support of the ESA Management, the FAO Innovation Fund and the project *Coherent Food Security Responses: Incorporating Right to Food into Global and Regional Food Security Initiatives* funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). Above all, we would like to acknowledge our members. Through their outstanding participation, continued commitment and support, they made this publication – and indeed the whole FSN Forum – possible.



Acronyms

AAHM	Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CSO	Civil society organization
DFID	Department For International Development (United Kingdom)
ESA	Agricultural Development Economics Division
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIVIMS	Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems
FSN Forum	Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition
GSF	Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts
ILO	International Labour Organization
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MAFAP	Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SOFA *The State of Food and Agriculture*

SOFI *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*

TECA Technologies and Practices for Small Agricultural Producers

UN United Nations

UNESCAP United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

WFP World Food Programme



Part One
The FSN Forum

As a practising farmer, and leader of the Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association, I have been a regular reader and contributor to the FSN Forum since 2009.

I have exchanged knowledge and shared experiences with other leaders in agriculture, changing my perceptions and expanding my opportunities. The FSN has really enhanced my knowledge, capacity and opportunities.



*Lizzy Igbine
Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association, Nigeria*

Introduction: Food Security in dialogue

by Kostas Stamoulis



© FAO / T. Lezzi

The Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum) was established in October of 2007 to bring together academics, researchers and development practitioners for facilitated online discussions and knowledge sharing on food security and nutrition. We launched our very first discussion, on "Drawing lessons from food security and nutrition research, analysis and information for improved decision making and response", with 300 registered members. Today, four years on and 75 discussions later, the FSN Forum is a thriving online community of over 3 700 registered members from 140 countries around the world.

But this has been much more than just a journey in numbers. As our membership has grown, so have our ambition, our diversity of approach and our relevance across every level of the world's work in food security and nutrition. For example, in the weeks leading up to the High-Level Expert Forum on "How to Feed the World in 2050" (held at FAO headquarters in Rome in October 2009), we launched a discussion on this topic, with the specific aim of informing and preparing for the High-Level Expert Forum itself. This discussion signalled a shift in the FSN Forum's approach towards more proactive, strategic and targeted knowledge generation and sharing. Since then, the Forum's online discussions have not only reflected the global dialogue on food security, nutrition, agriculture and rural development in a general sense, they have helped to enrich and inform policy and programme formulation in specific areas: from understanding food security at a conceptual level to its governance at a global level; from street foods to strategic frameworks; from prices to protracted crises and so much more – these are the kinds of discussions that make a difference.

Above all, and in its very essence, the FSN Forum embodies the multi-stakeholder approach that has become so central to decision-making and governance in food security and nutrition. So it was no surprise when it was chosen in 2011 to help enable and ensure exactly this kind of participatory, multi-stakeholder process for the newly reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and its High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE). In 2011 alone, we held seven online consultations for the HLPE and CFS combined. Each of these discussions was an opportunity for committed stakeholders from around the world to participate in the global policy debate, and for the HLPE and CFS to draw on the experiences, inputs and views of these stakeholders, to inform and enrich their work in food security and nutrition. Of course, the collaborations with the CFS and the HLPE are by no means the only instances of the FSN Forum's role as a "service provider" for decision-making processes in development – our "client list" includes a host of others such as the Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition

(AAHM), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), FAOSTAT and the Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) project, to name but a few.

Through all of this, the FSN Forum has also maintained its commitment to knowledge sharing and exchange at the grassroots level, ensuring that the proactive and “purpose-driven” consultations on policy are both balanced with and complimented by the more “organic” discussions on practice, and that the Forum remains relevant to its diverse range of stakeholders.

Today, the FSN Forum stands poised on the brink of even greater challenges, and even greater opportunities. From regional “hubs” that will allow for development practitioners to share knowledge in closer and more targeted ways, to a continued focus on strategically relevant discussions that reflect the changing landscape of food security and nutrition, to further growth in the Forum’s role in serving the policy process for participatory and multi-stakeholder governance, for FAO and others in the field of international development.

This publication reflects the breadth and diversity of the FSN Forum’s most recent achievements, as well as its future potential, by showcasing a handful of significant discussions that touched on central topics and trends in food security, nutrition and beyond. Some discussions are marked by debate, others by consensus, and still others are – quite simply – great discussions. Not every discussion results in a perfect solution to the problem, or even a perfect understanding of the problem, for that matter. But almost every one has given you something you may not have known – whether it’s a point of view you had not seen, or a consequence you had not considered, or a connection you had not made.

And so the goal of this book is not to reproduce the discussions themselves, or even to summarize their most important points. But instead, to provide a taste of what happens on the FSN Forum, and what can happen beyond it. We hope that you will find something among these pages that intrigues you, and that inspires you to visit the Forum itself. There, you can read about the discussions in full, and perhaps you’ll learn something new. Or, you can join us and start your own discussion, and we’ll all learn something.

At its core, the FSN Forum is not only about what we already know. It is also about the wealth of knowledge to be drawn and shaped from the perspectives, experiences and expertise of others. And it is in this learning that the bridge between tacit knowledge and evidence-based practice is made stronger.

Kostas Stamoulis

Director

FAO Agricultural Development Economics Division

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kostas Stamoulis', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

The numbers, facts and faces of the FSN Forum



A look behind the scenes: the FSN Forum Team

The FSN Forum Team is part of the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) at FAO. Under the leadership of the ESA Programme Coordinator, Mark Smulders, the Team plays a key role in communication and information sharing across the division, in addition to its work for the larger community of Forum members working in food security and nutrition around the world.

As FSN Forum Moderators, Renata Mirulla and Max Blanck are involved in the organization, scheduling and running of the different discussions, as well as the day-to-day maintenance of the network and platform: collecting contributions for ongoing discussions, preparing regular digests, summarizing completed discussions and – as a whole – ensuring that interactions run smoothly. Daniela Verona joined the Team as FSN Forum Designer, and is working on our overall image and identity, as well as a new look and feel for our website – towards a better, more user-friendly Forum all-round. And as FSN Forum Coordinator, Mauricio Rosales provides day-to-day management and oversight with regard to the Forum's strategic direction and goals.

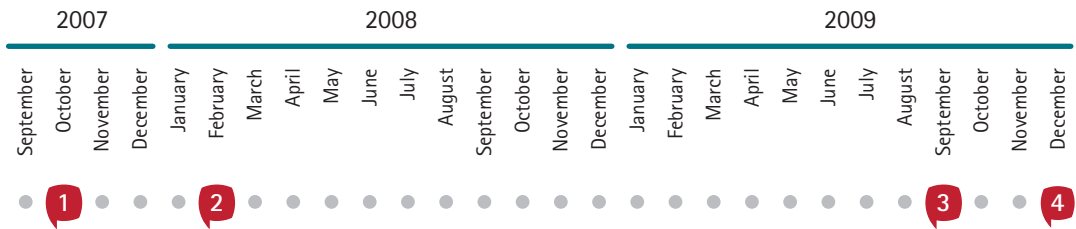


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Like the FSN Forum itself, the Team is much greater than the sum of its parts. We're able to give heart and passion to the people in this virtual community, and facilitate their coming together for meaningful change in the real world. This is what matters most about our work.

The FSN Forum Team

FSN Forum milestones: a timeline



1 October 2007

Official launch of the FSN Forum on World Food Day 2007. Mark Smulders, FAO Senior Economist, facilitates the first discussion on *Drawing lessons from food security and nutrition research, analysis and information for improved decision making and response*. The discussion brings in 32 contributions from 10 countries.

2 February 2008

First FSN Forum Brief: *Nutrition education for the public is essential*.

3 September 2009

Hartwig de Haen, former Assistant Director-General of FAO's Economic and Social Development Department, facilitates a targeted online discussion on *How to Feed the World in 2050* to help inform and prepare for the High-Level Expert Forum (held at FAO headquarters in Rome in October 2009).

The FSN Forum reaches 1 000 members.

4 December 2009

FSN Forum publication: *Knowledge Sharing for Improved Food Security and Better Nutrition. Two years of online discussions*.

5 January 2010

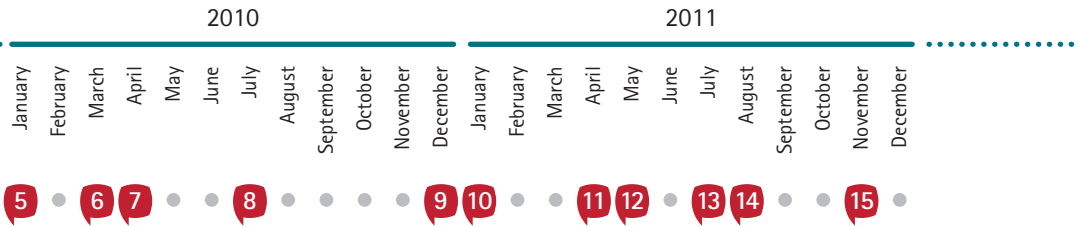
Implementation of the FSN Forum's new strategy addressing 5 aspects: content, communication, membership, funding and infrastructure.

6 March 2010

The FSN Forum joins Twitter.

7 April 2010

1 000th contribution received during the online discussion *Agricultural technologies and innovation; opportunities for making a difference*.



8 July 2010

The FSN Forum receives an award from the FAO Innovation Fund, in recognition of the Forum's existing and potential role in the facilitation of knowledge sharing, dialogue and communication on FAO initiatives.

The FSN Forum reaches 2 000 members.

9 December 2010

Barbara Stocking, Executive Director of Oxfam GB, facilitates the discussion *From Repeated Crisis to Long Term Food Security*.

10 January 2011

The FSN Forum starts organising online consultations for the High Level Panel of Experts of the Committee on World Food Security.

11 April 2011

The FSN Forum reaches 3 000 members during the discussion *Global Governance for Food Security: are the current arrangements fit for the job?*

12 May 2011

A second award from the FAO Innovation Fund brings additional support towards the scale-up and expansion of FSN Forum activities for knowledge sharing and exchange at the regional level.

13 July 2011

The FSN Forum starts collaborating with the Committee on World Food Security organising a targeted online consultation on the Annotated Outline of the CFS Global Strategic Framework.

14 August 2011

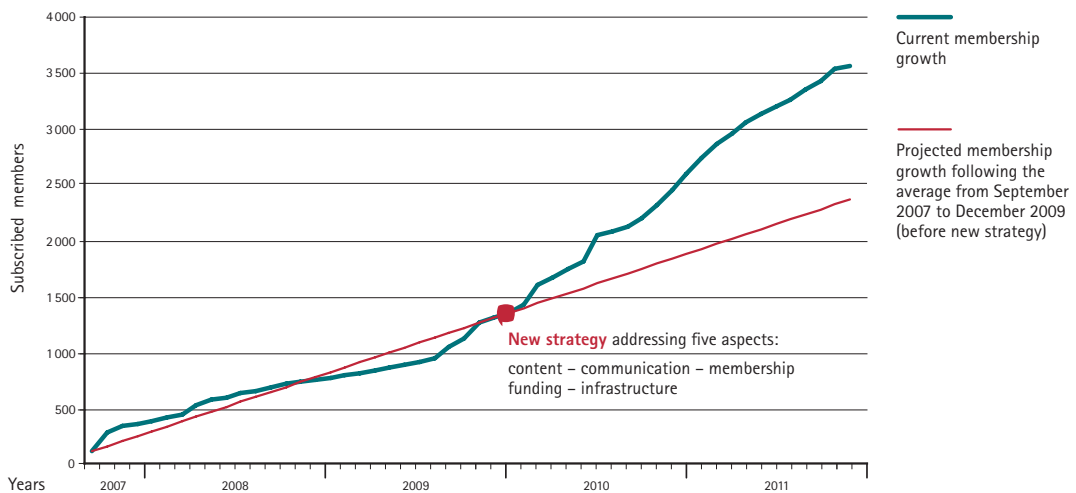
First regional consultation for the CARICOM countries for the development of an Action Plan for the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

15 November 2011

500th follower on Twitter.

Evolution of the FSN Forum

Table 1 – Membership growth



The FSN Forum was launched with 300 initial registered members by FAO's Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) in 2007 as a means to improve dialogue with the academic community and with FAO country offices.

The FSN Forum's range of activities evolved over the years, bringing with it strong and steady increases in both the number and diversity of members, and in the visibility and impact of discussions, especially on topics such as *How to feed the world in 2050*, *Livestock keepers' rights* and *Agricultural technologies and innovation* which attracted much interest and further solidified its role in facilitating relevant dialogue and debate.

In 2010, the FSN Forum took a new direction with a structured strategy addressing five aspects: content, communication, membership, funding and infrastructure. As a result, it received an award from the FAO Innovation Fund, which made possible the involvement of high-level facilitators and generally increased the level and quality of activities.

Thanks to increased recognition both within and outside FAO, during 2011 the FSN Forum strengthened its role as a channel of communication between practitioners and policy makers by organizing open and inclusive online consultations on behalf of the High Level Panel of Expert of the CFS and the CFS Secretariat. Furthermore, the FSN Forum has been supporting a series of targeted, thematic and regional online consultations in order to improve the impact of individuals and of the civil society on food security policy making. And lastly, by linking online discussions to FAO publications, news and events, the FSN Forum has been instrumental in supporting overall outreach and promotion on global food security and nutrition issues.

What brings people to the FSN Forum?

Every month, an average of 2 000 people visit the FSN Forum website from over 120 countries and territories around the world. Many are first-timers, as we like to call them, who find the FSN Forum through partner websites, word of mouth and search engines such as Google, where we consistently rank among the top three results for the term "food security and nutrition".¹

But most of our regular site visitors are, of course, our members. We asked a few of them what keeps them coming back:



I go to the Forum when I'm looking for out-of-the-box ideas. I love it!

*Ana Paula de la O Campos
Economist, FAO, Italy*

Many discussion platforms are little more than talk shops, but I find this one to be unique. It has really opened my mind, and it's very important to me – both in my daily work and for potential new assignments as well.



*Edward Mutandwa
Head of Department of Rural Development and Agribusiness, Rwanda*



Your network and information sharing is really enlightening, very meaningful and extremely informative.

*Silvia Kaufmann
Senior Nutrition Manager, UNICEF, Pakistan*

There are so many aspects for which the Forum is useful, indispensable to our students.



*George Simon
Steering Committee, Master in Human Development and Food Security, University of Roma Tre, Italy*

¹ Data from Google Analytics for 2011.

What a typical FSN Forum discussion looks like...

An FSN Forum discussion usually lasts three weeks in terms of “online” time, and has an average of around 60 contributions – although both the duration of the discussion and the number of contributions vary depending on the topic, time of year and interest. There is, on average, a 2:1 split between male and female contributors (again, this can vary substantially depending on the topic). Most contributions are at least a page each in length; this gives a good idea of the depth, detail and overall richness of the discussions.

The diversity of our membership is reflected in almost every discussion, with strong levels of participation from academic and research institutions, NGOs, civil society, UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations. In addition, recent discussions have shown growing participation from government and public sector institutions, including national ministries, embassies, and Permanent Representations to FAO. Contributions usually come from all over the world, and while we often have especially strong interest from Africa, Asia and Europe, it is typical for around 30 countries to be represented in any given discussion.

...and how it works

Each new discussion is launched with a brief introduction by the topic facilitator, who is usually an expert in the chosen topic area. The facilitator lays the groundwork for the discussion by providing general background, and highlighting any key questions to be considered. As many FSN Forum discussions are particularly results-oriented, the introduction also helps to build a shared understanding on goals for the discussion (for example, towards conference preparations, project planning and policy processes).

Members can then participate by logging onto the FSN Forum's website and posting their contribution online, or by emailing their contributions to the FSN Forum Team. During the course of the discussion, the facilitator may post follow-up messages that reflect or summarize the various contributions and suggest specific areas for further comment and response.

When relevant, the FSN Forum Team sets up parallel consultations with initiatives and networks such as the Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition (AAHM), Food for the Cities, Solution Exchange India and the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN). This cascading approach allows relevant discussions to reach an even wider audience than the Forum's core membership.

The Team also ensures that each discussion's “home page” offers links and references to related materials and sites, and in a more general sense, keeps members informed and updated on relevant publications, news and events (for example, contributing to outreach for FAO's reports on *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* and *The State of Food and Agriculture*, and increasing visibility and web traffic to events such as the 2012 International Scientific Symposium on Food and Nutrition Security Information).

As the discussion continues, discussion digests are prepared and sent out to the FSN Forum's mailing list, consolidating key contributions and news on the discussion. As many of our members prefer to interact with the Forum via email only (rather than visiting the website) these digests help ensure that all participants are updated, and help to maintain discussion

activity and interest. On occasion, the FSN Forum Team can also identify and invite specific individuals and organizations from the Forum's extended network to comment and contribute on a particular discussion (for example, to encourage representation from a particularly relevant discipline or geographic area).

Discussions usually end with a set of concluding remarks from the facilitator, touching on key issues and findings that may have emerged. The FSN Forum Team then prepares a summary of the discussion that is made available to all members.

The Forum accepts contributions written in English, French and Spanish. In the latter cases, an English translation is provided alongside the original contribution. While English serves as the main language for communication with the members, the Forum provides translations of all topic introductions and products such as summaries and briefs and keeps the website updated in all three languages. In addition, in the context of food governance consultations, the Forum makes use of all six official UN languages by providing translations into Arabic, Chinese and Russian.



I am a regular, almost daily follower... I always learn a lot from an FSN Forum discussion, and the moderators' summary after every discussion gives me an opportunity to add to my own library of knowledge on food security; it's very handy!

Kanchan Lama

Gender Specialist, Core Associate of WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management), Nepal

The Bioenergy and Food Security, Criteria and Indicators (BEFSCI) project has held two consultations through the FSN Forum. This kind of institutionalized consultation is extremely efficient: they offer broad outreach to highly qualified experts; they have gotten us very valuable feedback which we will use in our current and future work; and last but not least, they save us the considerable effort of organizing physical consultations in Rome.



Heiner Thofern

Coordinator, Bioenergy and Food Security Projects, FAO, Italy

Knowledge management and sharing: why the FSN Forum works



No one should be dying or suffering because knowledge that already exists in one part of the world has not reached other parts. It is up to each of us to take the responsibility to ensure the knowledge flows easily to where it is needed.²

What is Knowledge Management?

Knowledge Management is about capturing, creating and sharing knowledge within and across a community of individuals. The knowledge includes both explicit and tacit "know-how", and is shared with a view towards its adaptation, application and use in achieving the shared objectives of the community.

What is an online community?

An online community is a virtual network of people with common concerns or interests. Rather than meeting face-to-face at conferences or workshops, they come together in an online "space", using Internet-based tools such as email, web and social media to connect, communicate and collaborate towards shared goals and outputs.

Online communities for knowledge management and sharing

Online communities are extremely relevant and useful for knowledge management, particularly in the field of global development. They enable people to communicate and interact efficiently and effectively not only across geographical and political boundaries, but also across formal and informal lines such as discipline, sector, project, programme or stakeholder group, thereby ensuring more inclusive and participatory decision-making and, ultimately, more successful development.

2 Geoff Parcell, Foreword to *Tools for Knowledge and Learning*, by Ben Ramalingam (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2006).

What makes the FSN Forum a great online community?

Cultivating and maintaining a truly great online community is no easy task. We asked Stephen Katz, Chief of Knowledge Management and Library Services in FAO's Office of Knowledge and Information Exchange, what he thought were some of the key factors of the FSN Forum's success:

Sponsorship from the top

We know that knowledge management is important. And we know this at every level of the Organization. The FAO Director-General defined FAO as a Knowledge Organization in 2005. So it's no surprise that the FSN Forum has the support and buy-in of its managers to do the work that it does so well. This is important not only for ensuring that it has the staff and resources it needs, but also because behind the scenes, management support creates opportunities for added value and growth: through networking both inside and outside FAO for collaboration on consultations, for special events and seminars and for visibility beyond the FSN Forum's existing user base.

Supporting demand

While management support and vision is important, too much of a "top-down" approach is not useful. Too many knowledge sharing initiatives fail because they are based on the needs and priorities of their creators rather than the actual, articulated needs of the communities they seek to serve. The FSN Forum is a happy example of what happens when you facilitate structured, purpose-driven discussions around the things that people want to talk about, rather than the things you think they should talk about. When you do that, people come back for more.

Continuous, consistent (and consistently good) facilitation

Good facilitation is a basic requirement for enabling, cultivating and maintaining a successful knowledge sharing community. Working both on and offline, the FSN Forum Team helps to ensure an environment that is both open and structured, so that discussions are both dynamic and meaningful.

Right blend of membership

When we reviewed FAO's Thematic Knowledge Networks in 2008, we found that many of the truly successful networks and communities had a mixed and diverse membership, with some part of the member base being external. While this is not a hard and fast rule, there is no doubt that the FSN Forum's highly diverse membership is a particular strength – not only in terms of geography, but also in affiliation (with representation from technical cooperation and international organizations; government, NGOs and civil society; research institutions and academia and the private sector). And while all the members are interested in food security and nutrition, they are highly varied in their respective disciplines and areas of specialization, which often results in richer and more interesting discussions.

Reaching out across languages and connectivity

A diversity of membership inevitably means a diversity of user needs and preferences. And the FSN Forum is both flexible and inclusive about how (and how much) its members can interact with it. The option to post via email (instead of via the website) means that those “off-line” (for example, in countries with inconsistent Internet access) can contribute. The multi-lingual support means that members can contribute in the language they are most comfortable with. And the email digests and updates mean that members can opt to have information delivered to them on a regular basis. Choices like these result in an online community that is easier to use, and therefore much more likely to be used.



The Forum discussions are interesting and timely, and they help us field people connect with one another.

Charles Teller

Adjunct Professor, George Washington University and Addis Ababa University

As a platform, I appreciate how the Forum connects with experts, specialists and stakeholders around the world. The sharing of information and views really helps me to develop my knowledge.



F. M. Safiul Azam

Lecturer, University of Development Alternative, Bangladesh



Part Two
The online discussions

I think that debate is very important and I enjoy the discussions and the good summaries...

I also teach food security assessment in a few Masters' courses, and forward Forum information to my students when relevant. I really like the format, and it's easy to get an idea of content each week. This is so useful for people who are very busy.



Kay Muir-Leresche
Independent consultant, South Africa

The following is a selection of the FSN Forum's online discussions held in 2010 / 2011.

Complete references of all discussions including full contributions received, summaries and bibliographies are available on the FSN Forum website www.fao.org/fsnforum.

Current Food Security Concepts


Facilitated by Mark Gibson



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Statistics of the discussion

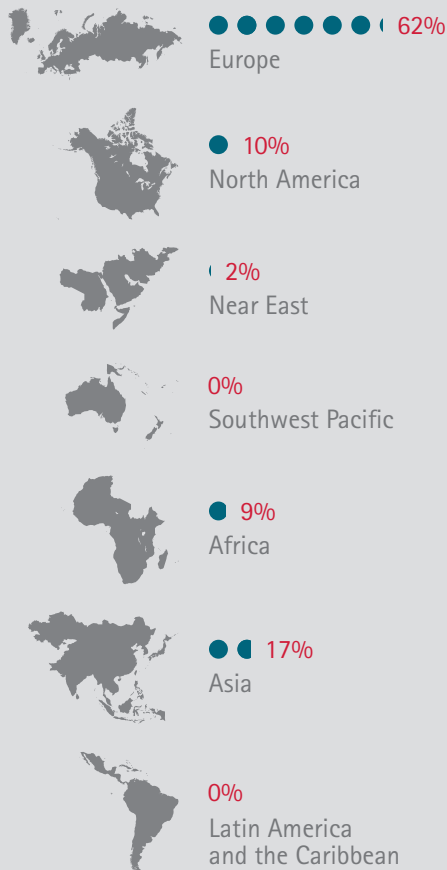
 From 10 to 23 November 2010

 **42** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Current Food Security Concepts



During his Ph.D. at Manchester Metropolitan University, Mark Gibson specialized in food security issues, and on how people understand the food security phenomenon as a whole. As part of his research towards an upcoming book on food security, Mark conducted an online discussion on the FSN Forum in November of 2010. He asked the FSN Forum's community of experts to reflect upon the underlying concepts, definitions and frameworks that had been developed so far to explain and address food security, and to explore ways in which these might be improved upon. His introductory questions served to lay the groundwork for the analysis:

1. **Do the current FAO, US and other definitions of food security adequately serve the modern notion of food security?**
2. **As well as the accepted notions of Availability, Access, Utilization and Stability, are there any other fundamental constructs that could be further added to improve the holistic understanding of the concept?**
3. **With regard to food security frameworks and models, particularly the diagrammatic types (DFID livelihoods; FIVIMS food security; FAO livelihoods etc.):**
 - Are these easy to understand, do they portray a good idea of the concept?
 - Are there any common or recurring errors, omissions or ambiguities?
 - If you could improve on any of these how would you do so?
4. **Is there sufficient understanding of the concept of food security?**
5. **Is there one website or book to read, which explains everything about food security in a simple intuitive fashion?**

This discussion struck a chord among FSN Forum members from most sectors and disciplines, all working at varying levels of "closeness" to food security: from statisticians to communication practitioners, from staff at UN agencies such as FAO and WFP to those working in the NGO sector, and from academics and researchers to independent experts at country level – the number and diversity of inputs underscored the multi-disciplinary, wide-ranging nature of food security itself.

While most contributions did not call for a complete overhaul in the established ways of presenting and considering food security, many did offer suggestions for change, particularly

in terms of incorporating additional “dimensions” to address and ensure necessary focus on key areas (economics, nutrition, sustainability, etc.), and in terms of enabling more concrete applications of food security theory in practical situations.

Several contributors offered their own working variations on established models, illustrating the value of adapting and merging different components to form “hybrid” frameworks for specific food security situations. For example: the WFP-CFSVA framework is a combination of the DFID livelihoods framework and the UNICEF nutrition framework. These examples emphasized the need for an array of multiple, multi-disciplinary, dynamic frameworks. They also suggested a need for greater adaptability and flexibility in choosing from this array, so that the “right” concept or framework can be chosen or easily adapted for a given audience or context.

And lastly, while a few participants questioned the emphasis on abstract theory rather than practice (“thought vs. action”), it was recognized that food security is in fact an extremely complex topic and development objective, and that a better, more accessible understanding of its practical workings is needed.

Resource Roundup

Several members shared their favorite online references for understanding food security:

- 📄 [EC-FAO Food Security Programme - Food Security Information for Decision Making](#)
- 📄 [Food Security Information for Action: Learning Center](#)
- 📄 [FIVIMS Conceptual Framework](#)
- 📄 [World Food Programme - Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis \(CFSVA\) Guidelines](#)
- 📄 [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#)
- 📄 [Ensuring a food secure future | PANOS London](#)

Full source details are available in the discussion summary on the website.

• • • THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS • • • • •

The inside view: a tower of Babel

Anyone working in global development today must work across languages and cultures, and must therefore contend with all the problems of translation, communication, messaging, nuance and nomenclature that relate. But the complex cross-sectoral nature of food security

and its multi-disciplinary roots are especially challenging. IFPRI reports 200 variations on the definition of food security alone, and 450 possible indicators. There are differences in methodologies – what to measure, how to measure it, and even how well to measure it – and therefore in the measurements themselves. And there are differences in complementary (and often competing) terms such as “food safety”, “food sovereignty” and the “right to food” – all of which further contribute to the challenges of communicating for and about food security.

...and the outside view – jargon and lack of clarity

Even if relevant experts around the world could agree on a definition or a framework that addressed the multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral needs of this complex area of work, they'd be hard-pressed to find one that anyone else could understand easily. The verbal and visual language of food security is cluttered with esoteric terms, technical / "insider" jargon and complicated diagrams; making it extremely difficult for outsiders and non-experts to understand and absorb the issues, and making it that much easier for them to lose interest completely.

It's what you do with it that counts

The issue may not lie with the concepts, definitions and frameworks in and of themselves; instead it may lie with how different people working in different contexts can actually use and apply the theoretical building blocks in their respective situations. For example: it's not that the established definition of food security needs to be revised or updated for relevance. Rather, it needs to be more readily translatable into actionable terms that can help identify those who are food-insecure, and then address their needs practically and systematically.

Different strokes for different (food security) folks

Whether a theoretical concept or framework serves the fight against hunger depends on whose attention you intend to capture with it: some may find a framework clear and comprehensive, while others may find it confusing and overly complex. So perhaps the best framework is the one that works best for you, your audience and your particular food security perspective.

A rich menu of frameworks and theory for everyone

Many contributions reflected a need for additional variables or "dimensions" to be included within standard food security definitions and frameworks, in order to address and ensure necessary focus on these areas, and increase the practical relevance of food security theory to real-world situations. Nutrition was highlighted in particular, in terms of extending the "default" view from food security to food and nutrition security as an intrinsic whole.

But there were many other potential additions to the food security "menu":

- from more economics (market-based approaches for demand and supply, cash-cropping over subsistence farming, etc.) to less economics (the risk of oversimplification through indicators such as GDP per capita, etc.);
- from evolutionary ecology and population-density to the realities of globalization (agro-industrial development, new technologies and urbanization); and
- from ensuring sustainability (so that current solutions to food security do not endanger future generations) to building resilience.

And while the individual "dishes" on this menu did not always reinforce or complement each other, they did signal a need for more choices when picking and choosing the components of a food security framework; and for a broader, more comprehensive and participatory approach overall.

From the web page to the bookshelf: how the FSN Forum helped Mark Gibson write his book

Mark Gibson's book *The Feeding of Nations: Re-Defining Food Security for the 21st Century* (published in February 2012) addresses the fundamental questions about food security for key contexts such as climate change, food and fuel competition, and land-use policy changes; and considers current trends and emerging challenges that are relevant to policy at both local and international levels.

We asked Mark Gibson whether the peer assist he conducted on the FSN Forum had helped him with his book. The short answer? *"It was hugely influential!"*

The entire process to write the book took about four years, and I was about three-quarters of the way into it when I turned to the FSN Forum. I was looking for some highlights, or maybe a few quotes – but I found much more. The discussion strengthened what I already knew, and it also gave me some great insight into some very different perspectives. It helped to round out many of the themes of the book and to shape the conclusion – especially in terms of the complexity of food security.

For example, the discussion showed me that people who work in food security are usually very specialized in some particular aspect of it – such as the measurement and statistics of food security, or the economics of it – and so food security means many different things to different people. That, coupled with the overall complexity of food security, helped me to see that one framework or model is not enough. So in the end I used three different models in the book, each with a slightly different level of complexity and focus. It was really a case of the right findings at the right time!

Overall, I was struck by the sheer quality of responses, and moreover, by the caliber and level of expertise of the respondents themselves: one often thinks of experts in the international development community in terms of the "ivory tower" image, but everyone at the FSN Forum was extremely friendly and helpful. Several participants took the time to correspond via email, and even offered to help me with parts of the book. It was incredibly impressive to see so many high-level people respond and contribute so readily. You can't beat that for information sharing!


Women in Agriculture


Facilitated by Jennie Dey de Pryck



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Statistics of the discussion

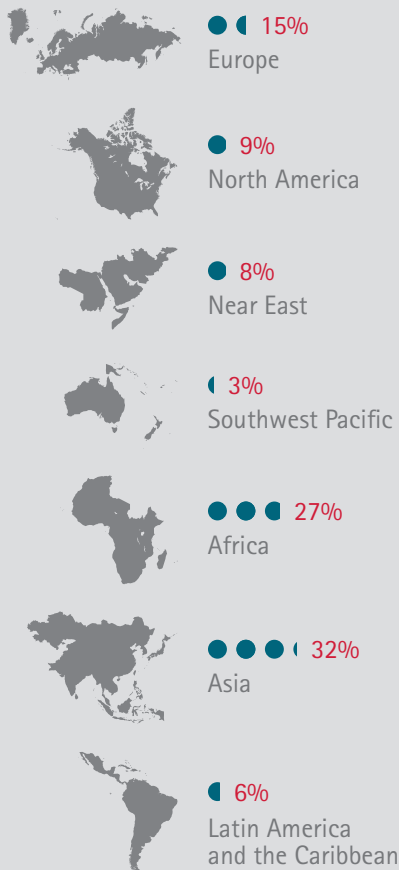
 From 24 May to 11 June 2010

 **78** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Women in Agriculture



Jennie Dey de Pryck, former Chief of the Rural Institutions and Participation Service at FAO, has worked for many years on gender and rural employment, gender and agriculture and on rural institutions and cooperative issues. In March of 2011, Jennie facilitated a special discussion in follow up to the launch of FAO's 2010-11 report on *The State of Food and Agriculture*, which addresses *Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development*. The report makes a clear case for promoting gender equality in agriculture: if women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, agricultural production in developing countries could be increased by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people.

Using the recommendations from the report as both a stimulus and a platform, Jennie invited fellow FSN Forum members to share practical experiences and lessons learned for "turning rhetoric into reality", in the context of three inter-related questions:

- 1. What policies have worked or failed to achieve gender equality in agriculture – why and with what consequences? How can we promote the design and implementation of agricultural policies that are gender-aware and gender-transformative?**
- 2. What programmes and projects have proved particularly innovative and catalytic for enhancing rural women's agricultural roles, output and livelihoods?**
- 3. How can we support poor rural women in their efforts to mobilize and empower themselves?**

With 75 contributions in just over three weeks, this was one of the FSN Forum's most active, dynamic conversations in 2011. The majority of contributions came from Africa and Asia, and reflected a wide range of backgrounds including academia, government, private sector and civil society, as well as development practitioners and gender experts from the international community. The breadth of inputs was both impressive and telling: a recurring pattern of common factors and "usual suspects" echoed through the many individual contributions, both validating and reinforcing their relevance to the debate. These included land rights, credit, policy vs. practice, political and traditional systems, time-poverty, market access, education, data and visibility and many others.

Several contributions addressed Jennie's particular challenges: how to move beyond gender-aware policy to gender-transformative policy and implementation; and how to empower women without upsetting cultural norms (or creating conflict with men). And almost all connected to key recommendations from the *State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11*: improving the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data; strengthening rural institutions and making them gender-aware; freeing women for more rewarding and productive activities; eliminating discrimination against women under the law; building the human capital of women and girls; making gender-aware decisions in agricultural policy and fostering culture change among both men and women at all levels.

Lastly, and perhaps most powerfully, this discussion was particularly rich in concrete examples, success stories and lessons learned – a true best practice in knowledge and information exchange.

THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS

A collective approach for dealing with food security and climate change in India

The Tamilnadu Women's Collective in India is a federation of village-level women's groups with over 150 000 members from 1 500 villages, spread over 16 districts in the State of Tamil Nadu, India. The majority of the members belong to the Dalit community, the lowest in terms of socio-economic and caste hierarchy, and tend to be subsistence agriculturists or landless labourers.

The Collective focuses on both joint and individual efforts at local, state and national levels, for fair and sustainable food systems. Members follow three principles for food security:

1. empowerment of women as political actors in society, and as co-decision makers at the household level;
2. participation of women in democratic local governance structures; and
3. promotion of multifunctional agriculture.

In addition, and within the context of local climate and water crises, the women focus on proven agricultural practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience to climate change. These interventions are synergistic, as they bring together an "adaptation strategy" and a "mitigation strategy" – the women trust their traditional knowledge, but have also built on it by selectively and carefully introducing both modern and pre-existing practices.

Over the last ten years, these women have enhanced productivity and sustainability, and have improved food and water security at individual, household and local levels.

Getting from policy to practice

While comprehensive, coherent policy approaches are certainly important, even the most perfect policy is useless without meaningful implementation. This requires true culture change among both men and women at every level of society, from rural communities to ruling elites. And it must be coupled with coordination and monitoring among government and international organizations, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and other institutions across both thematic and geographic areas.

But it also requires a realistic, context-sensitive approach that balances the value of “formal” laws (which reflect the rights of the individual), against customary, traditional or religious laws (which primarily reflect the rights of the community or collective).

A tradition of sharing: women farmers in rural Sri Lanka

In rural areas of Sri Lanka, women take the lead in organizing reciprocal or shared agricultural labour groups among neighbours, relatives and friends; and in maintaining traditional food-sharing systems. By working in turn on each other’s agricultural fields, they can address labour costs and shortages, while sharing knowledge on such things as seed varieties, planting materials and propagation methods. And, during times of food shortage or crisis (drought, floods and wars or disease outbreaks, etc.) the bonds within these traditional networks ensure that effective food sharing is a commonly practised norm.

From milk to yoghurt: a strawberry-flavoured success story in Kenya

Miriam Ng'ang'a is a dairy farmer based in Kiambu Country, Kenya. She used to sell her milk to the local dairy cooperative society, until a local microfinance institution, the Pamoja Women Development Program (PAWDEP), helped her to obtain funding from Oikocredit, and a local NGO trained her in the making of yoghurt as a way to increase the value of her milk.

Today, Miriam makes yoghurt in several flavours, including vanilla and strawberry. Her cowherd has grown from one to seven, and she buys additional milk to meet the demand for yoghurt. Miriam markets her products herself: selling to local farmers in her area, and to retailers and wholesalers in Easleigh, Nairobi. She makes four times as much money as she would make selling through a dairy. She works together with her husband, Ernest, employs several people from the community, and says she plans to continue to expand her dairy farming.

Strength in numbers for women in Sadore, Niger

In the village of Sadore in Niger, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) faced two seemingly unrelated realities that are typical of West Africa and the Sahel:

1. Much of the land is degraded and unsuitable for cultivation, often with crusted red soils that are impermeable to water.
2. Women have few inheritance rights, and are not allowed to own agricultural land. Even if a woman does manage to start a vegetable garden, the husband typically takes it over as soon as it becomes successful.

In an agreement with the village chief, who is responsible for the community-owned lands of the village, a parcel of the degraded lands was formally allotted to the local women's association for a period of twenty years. ICRISAT-Niger then worked with the women to implement a specially-adapted system for rain-fed horticulture production, planting drought-tolerant fruit and vegetable trees and high-value vegetables such as okra. The system, known as "Bioreclamation of Degraded Lands" (BDL), supplies plenty of nutritious food. Besides providing an annual income for the women themselves, this has led to improved food security for both men and women in the village as a whole, even in periods of drought.

Good things come in small packages: how *Bolsa Familia* gives Brazilian women a boost

As part of the Brazil's Zero Hunger Initiative, the *Bolsa Familia* social protection programme provides monthly grants to an estimated 12 million families via a system of withdrawal cards. Wherever possible, the cards are entrusted to adult women in the families, as research shows that this increases the likelihood that funds are used towards food security and child nutrition. As a by-product of this simple administrative decision, millions of women in the poorest sectors of Brazilian society were able to gain greater decision-making power and social status within immediate familial and household networks.

FAO video on "Closing the gap between men and women in agriculture"

And lastly, several case studies from this discussion were shared and referenced during the early stages of content collection for a video animation "short" on *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11*. The concrete success stories (in particular, how credit and training enabled the dairy farmer Miriam Ng'ang'a to develop her yoghurt business, and the collective ownership approach to land rights for the women of Sadore in Niger) contributed to the design and storyboarding process for the video, which was launched in December 2011.



As a student, I benefited a lot from the insights of researchers who freely disseminated their study findings to other members in the Forum. There were also many useful resources cited by different contributors, and these helped with my homework, as I was able to reference the articles and the information they provided.

Overall, the FSN Forum has also shown me that when it comes to global food security and agriculture issues, every thought and impact – no matter high- or low-level – counts.

Raymond Erick Zvavanyange

M. Sc. student, Zimbabwe

As a participant to the FSN Forum discussions I can say that the experience of sharing practical experience is unique and allows us to refine our theoretical concepts. Only by sharing we can succeed in building learning processes that are useful to all of us working in this field.



Victor Puac

Director of SESAN (Secretaría de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional), Guatemala


Street Foods


Facilitated by Giorgia Nicolò



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Statistics of the discussion

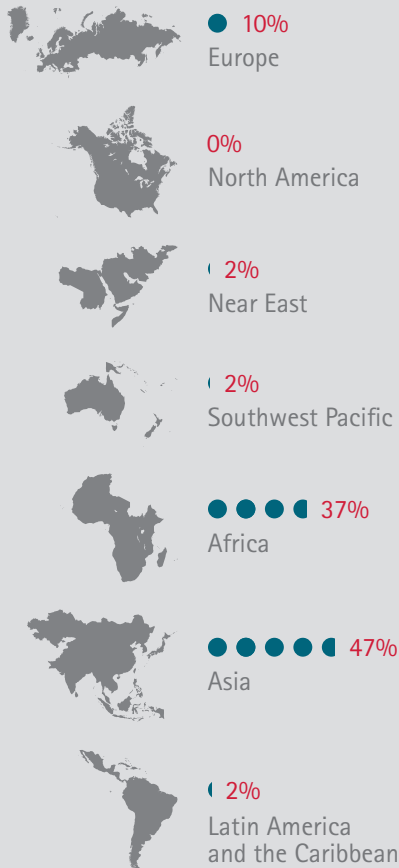
 From 26 September to 21 October 2011

 **57** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Street Foods



Urban populations are growing rapidly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This has led to an increase in the demand for relatively inexpensive and ready-to-eat foods, as urban residents tend to spend most of the day outside the house and have little time or money to spend on food. Meals and beverages sold by outdoor "street food" vendors therefore figure prominently in the diet and nutrition of urban populations, including and especially among lower income groups. However, they also play a dangerous role in the spread of disease, as bad food hygiene and safety practices can lead to contamination with bacteria and other germs.

In this general context, Giorgia Nicolò of the FAO Regional Office for Africa facilitated a discussion on street foods, with input from Lalita Bhattacharjee, Mohammad Abdul Mannan and Flavio Bellomi of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme in FAO Bangladesh.

As part of FAO's regional strategy on improving food safety and nutrition in Africa, and in particular, for a specific study on street food vendors incentives to improve the safety, quality and nutritional value of street food, Giorgia invited fellow FSN Forum members to share experiences and views on specific approaches for improving the safety, quality and nutritional value of street foods:

- 1. What types of incentives have worked in improving food safety and quality, what types have not worked and why?**
- 2. Are there examples of concrete measures promoted by local authorities to recognize and increase visibility for street food vendors who produce safer and/or more nutritious food?**
- 3. How can cultural norms and practices related to vendor and consumer behaviour regarding the preparation of street foods be strengthened and addressed within local contexts?**
- 4. What kinds of innovative and successful policy approaches have been implemented by local authorities to control the potential negative impacts (unsafe food, pollution, disruptions in traffic, etc.)?**

This discussion had a strong representation from Africa and South Asia, where street foods are particularly common.

In addition to food safety and nutrition, many contributors saw street foods as highly relevant to other, more general aspects of international development, given the important role that street food vending plays in livelihoods, income and employment for so many people in developing countries around the world – including and especially for women.

As with other discussions, the contributions reflected a range of diverse viewpoints and areas of expertise, and consequently underscored the value of a multidisciplinary approach that considers stakeholders across various levels and sectors. Besides the vendors themselves, these stakeholders include the producers and suppliers, the consumers of street food, government and public institutions (including local authorities involved in health, urban planning, water, sewage, etc.), the private sector and the community as a whole.

There was also a sense that this is a complex and delicate sector that requires careful analysis before large-scale interventions are attempted by government, local authorities, NGOs, or development agencies. This analysis should include a thorough understanding of the motivating factors that bring both vendors and consumers to the table – or the stall – and what keeps them coming back for more.

And lastly, it was clear that there is both a need and a potential opportunity for street foods to address food security and nutrition among growing urban populations. As noted by Lalita Bhattacharjee of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme in FAO Bangladesh: *“Our experiences with the street food vending project in Dhaka showed great potential for scaling up and providing safe and healthy street foods and services to address food security and nutrition. There are real opportunities for FAO and others to play an important role in technical support through capacity building tools, techniques and models, and to make a difference in consumer food choices and in the incomes and livelihoods of street food sellers.”*

Resource Roundup

In addition to the sharing of actual data and findings from completed or ongoing studies on street foods and vending in various regions, several participants cited specific resources for information, guidelines and best practices:

-  [Discussion on Food Safety in Urban Food Catering Services \(Food and Nutrition Security Community of Practice / Solution Exchange India\)](#)
-  [Good Hygienic Practices in The Preparation and Sale of Street Food in Africa](#)
-  [Improving the Nutritional Quality of Street Foods to Better Meet the Micronutrient Needs of Schoolchildren in Urban Areas](#)
-  [Safer street foods](#)
-  [Street foods in Nairobi, Kenya: their role as a source of micronutrients in low income groups](#)
-  [Strengthening food security and street foods safety through microbiological quality control along the food chain in West African cities \(abstract, recommendations and conclusion\)](#)

Full source details are available in the discussion summary on the website.

The carrot or the stick?

Much of the debate centered on ways to ensure or enforce better food safety and hygiene: organizing vendors into cooperatives and groups; linking a registered licensing system to mandatory education and certification in food safety and hygiene; and stronger regulations (and their effective enforcement) by government and state bodies.

But several contributions noted the potential disadvantages of an overly regulatory approach: vendors come from extremely vulnerable realities, and too many rules and regulations may raise barriers and costs to such a point that they are likely to "go underground", resulting in another informal or "black market" sector and rendering the whole exercise pointless.

Instead, they proposed more supportive, incentive-based approaches, including free or low-cost education and training in food safety and hygiene for vendors and preparers; providing adequate facilities for the preparation and sale of street foods in public spaces (for example, street food "market" halls with clean running water, sanitation and trash collection, and so on); facilitating entrepreneurial improvement through microcredit schemes and access to new technologies; and – for street food consumers – targeted campaigns for education and awareness on hygiene, disease-control and health.

It's not just about the food...

Improvements to the street foods sector, whether based on incentives or on regulation, require a coordinated, interdependent approach across many different government institutions. These include ministries and other public entities that are responsible for health, nutrition, environment, sanitation, urban planning and labour, and any others whose mandates affect (or are affected by) street food vending and its appropriate governance. In particular, involvement and support from local police and legal institutions is crucial for enforcing and maintaining compliance, as well as for preventing corruption and exploitation of the vendors themselves.

This coordination should then extend outward to include collaboration with the relevant institutions in the international development, NGO and civil society sectors, to further ensure coherence in both planning and implementation of policies related to street foods.



A lot of inputs made me think differently about the way I was going to approach my research. For instance, I had not considered that transforming street food vending into a completely formal sector could create even more "informal" vendors. So I have personally learnt a lot from the discussion. And I think – for me anyway – it has unveiled a community of people working and studying on the same subject and, hopefully, created a network of experts as well.

Giorgia Nicoló

Associate Professional Officer for Food Safety, FAO Regional Office for Africa, Ghana


Food Security in Protracted Crisis


Facilitated by Barbara Stocking



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Statistics of the discussion

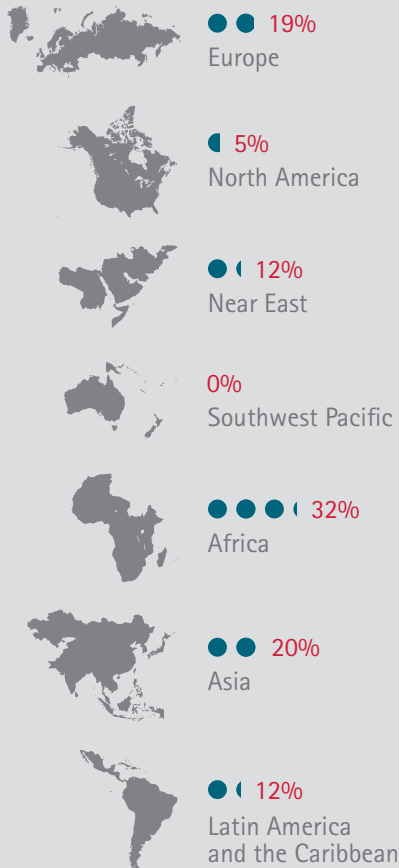
 From 7 December 2010 to 21 January 2011

 **41** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Food Security in Protracted Crisis



FAO's *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010* noted that the 22 countries currently in protracted crisis are home to almost 20% of the world's chronically hungry population. Improving food security in these countries is proving to be a major challenge: despite decades of aid, investment, policy and programming, the specter of hunger remains. As topic facilitator for the discussion, Barbara Stocking, Executive Director of Oxfam GB began by noting the "known solutions" in policy and programmatic terms:

- promotion of agricultural and rural livelihoods;
- social protection and disaster risk reduction programmes;
- early intervention and early recovery;
- supporting local institutions and capacities;
- promoting improved food security analysis and early warning.

While these approaches have resulted in progress, and while there are many examples of successful programming, results are not being seen at scale. In this context, Barbara Stocking's key questions for the discussion centered on possible "barriers" to effective programming in protracted crises:

1. **Is it lack of detailed guidance at the operational level?**
2. **Is it limitations due to funding streams?**
3. **Is it a lack of leadership at national level?**

FSN Forum members were invited to explore these and other potential barriers, and to share experiences and insights towards better solutions.

This was a discussion of consensus more than debate: there was common understanding on many aspects of food insecurity in protracted crises, particularly in terms of both "barriers" and components of likely solutions.

In addition to the issues of operational guidance, funding and leadership, many contributors highlighted a lack of coordination among organizations and programmes, and the need for greater focus on social structures, and community / local support for greater resiliency

and relevance. A specific case shared in this context was the Brazilian *Bolsa Familia* scheme, which illustrated how safety-net programmes may be worth considering in protracted crisis contexts, to increase resilience and resistance to shocks among those who are most vulnerable.

Lastly, a number of contributions highlighted climate change and resource depletion as particularly important factors in protracted crisis, and called for targeted adaptation and mitigation strategies to be included as key components of food security projects and programmes.

••• THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS •••••

Customizing for the country

From politics and economics to social and cultural values, every country situation is different and unique. Instead of a "one-size-fits-all" approach, food security solutions should therefore be customized to suit the particular circumstances of the countries they are targeting.

These "country-packaged" solutions should consider each country's cultural, political, legal, economic and market context, especially in terms of the typical issues that relate to protracted crisis (political instability and conflict, social inequality, corruption, lack of political will, etc.). In addition, they should engage and involve local institutions and stakeholders from all sectors and disciplines in the design and customization of food security strategies, to further ensure their long-term relevance and sustainability.

When less (over a longer period of time) is more

External partners and development organizations should act as facilitators for institutional and capacity development in the long-term, rather than "stepping-in" for public institutions through short- and medium-term projects. This will help towards more organic, sustainable growth in the capacity of local institutions and in the expertise of local officials, while also enabling greater public confidence in these institutions and officials for the long term. Similarly, donor funding should be flexible both in terms of time (multi-year) and purpose /scope, and should work in conjunction with national and regional funding streams.

Communication, communication, communication

At the field and country levels, local media and civil society need to be mobilized, sensitized and strengthened. Multi-level communication campaigns need to figure prominently in any food security efforts: these can educate and inform target groups (whether they are the youth or the community elders) about the projects themselves, as well as the larger context of protracted crisis. At the same time, they can address the "fragmented programming" issue by helping to ensure better coordination and harmonization among the various actors and influences.

And at a global level, there is much that needs to be done to increase public consciousness and understanding, especially as chronic hunger does not seem to garner public interest and response the way that food emergencies do. This may be because the scale and severity of the problem is difficult to grasp: for most people, the extremely high numbers of those suffering from hunger and the underlying concepts (undernourishment, long term food insecurity, etc.) are – at best – difficult to understand and – at worst – downright overwhelming. In addition, as the different sectors of international development (and even the different institutions within these sectors) vie for public attention and visibility, they send out competing or even conflicting messages that can further confuse the issue. International institutions, NGOs and civil society therefore need to work together for shared visibility and clear, coherent communication campaigns that ensure true public awareness and understanding of the problem: the relevance and scale, the potential for solving it, and the benefits of solving it – not only for directly-affected families and communities, but for the world at large.

All together now – putting the cooperation back in "technical cooperation"

Fragmented programming is a fundamental issue: in many areas, the duplication and overlap of efforts among the various agencies, NGOs, projects and initiatives leads to redundant, scattered and often even conflicting results – when instead, the pooling of these same efforts would lead to far more coherent and significant successes. This is the case in many development contexts, but is a particularly serious issue in areas of protracted crisis. There needs to be more dialogue and exchange of information across (and sometimes even within) organizations at all stages of project and programme work – from planning and funding through to implementation – with a true commitment to ensuring maximum efficiency and harmonization of efforts for a given geographic area or thematic issue.

Going local...

The potential of community-led initiatives, of local institutions as local drivers of change, and of direct engagement with local communities as beneficiaries need to be better harnessed (there is still too much of a top-down, representative-input approach). Local and small-scale successes can and should provide lessons for larger-scale initiatives. Pre-existing, traditional institutions should be valued for their adaptability and resilience, and creative approaches are needed to retain and involve them, so that both traditional and modern systems can be leveraged at community and local levels.

...and going regional too

Regional institutions should be involved in enhancing leadership and institutional capacities. This is especially important given the transboundary nature of food security and nutrition, and given that tribal, ethnic, and traditional systems still affect many governing systems at national level, causing tension or conflict.



The Forum helps me to keep in touch with what others in my field are doing around the world. Not only do I enjoy reading the excellent contributions, I feel included and involved in this larger community of people who are all working for greater food and nutrition security.

Sib Olo

Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping officer, World Food Programme, Democratic Republic of the Congo


Agricultural Technologies and Innovation


Facilitated by Peter Steele



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Statistics of the discussion

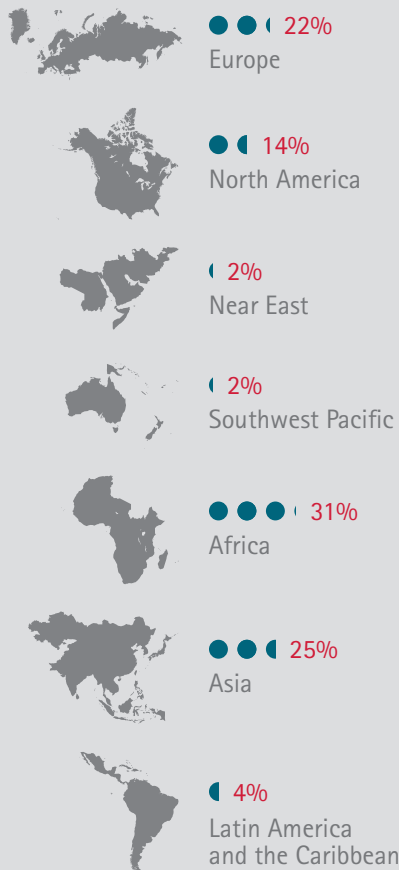
 From 6 April to 10 May 2010

 **49** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Agricultural Technologies and Innovation



The discussion on Agricultural Technologies and Innovation was facilitated by Peter Steele, who was working at the time in the FAO Regional Office for the Near East in Cairo. As an Agro-Industries Engineer, Peter was particularly interested in the role that technology can play in agriculture and agricultural productivity, and its potential for addressing food security in today's world. His questions to the FSN Forum were focused on understanding the value and relevance of both old and new technologies, and on exploring how technology can be applied appropriately, especially in the smaller-scale context of farming systems in Africa and other developing countries:

- 1. What is the value of older technologies in a world that seems increasingly more dependent on innovation?**
- 2. Are agriculture technologies essential?**
- 3. How should technologies be scaled so that they have value for the poorer, less capable sectors of agricultural production?**
- 4. Can agro-production in Africa succeed in feeding expanding populations through the introduction and adaptation of appropriate agricultural technologies? And if so, how? (And if not, why not?)**

The discussion drew strong representation from the field in both Africa and Asia and from many developed countries in Europe and North America. It featured a lively mix of both consensus and debate. Many contributions underscored the unique potential there is for technology to address issues of production and sustainability at the same time. And most participants agreed on the intrinsic and often pragmatic value of "old" technologies – especially in rural farming systems and societies, and most agreed that – whether old or new – the success of any technology in a real-world adaptation depends on how appropriate and relevant it is to the specific circumstances and situation. But a few divergent opinions cautioned against seeing technology as automatically equivalent to improvements, and illustrated the need to consider not only where and how, but also for whom change is necessary or even relevant, especially in terms of the difference between subsistence farmers and smallholders.

• • • THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS • • •

Technology of the farmer, by the farmer, for the farmer

Typical processes for research and development in agricultural technology are often conducted at a distance from “end-users”, and any findings and results are often communicated in ways that are not tailored to these target audiences. When it comes to the appropriate adoption of new technologies, this can often lead to greater resistance among farmers – no matter how valuable the technologies may be. Farmers need to be better integrated into agricultural research processes, through farmer participatory research and similar approaches, and farmer understanding and “buy-in” need to be central to the communication messages that come out of these processes.

In one example of farmer participatory research, the Peermade Development Society, an NGO in Kerala, India uses the “Land to Lab” approach for participatory technology development, essentially reversing the conventional paradigm for technology transfer in rural agriculture. Instead of developing technologies in the lab and then transferring them “to the land” via capacity building and training programmes, the Land to Lab process starts with the identification and documentation of existing innovations and technologies, or traditional knowledge and practices among rural farmers (including implements and tools, veterinary and animal husbandry, cultivation and crop management, pest management and processing). Selected solutions are then subjected to formal and informal validation and development for added value, before being disseminated and shared more widely.

At every stage of the process the Peermade Development Society works with a wide array of partners:

- for collection and identification of existing practices, they work with extension workers, local media, field staff from local agriculture institutions and women's self-help groups;
- for the study and validation of various solutions (and for eventual development / refinement), they network with other NGOs and organizations working in farmer innovation (such as the Honey Bee Network and the National Innovation Foundation of India), as well as research and development institutes and government agencies;
- for the dissemination of the value-added practices and innovations, they work through various commercial and non-commercial sectors.

Over a span of eight years, Land to Lab has mobilized around 10 000 innovations and practices from across Kerala; with over 40 innovations receiving national awards from the National Innovation Foundation of India.

Resisting trends in Africa

A host of academic and scientific studies have considered why many new technologies introduced in Africa have not been fully integrated into smallholder systems the way they were through the Green Revolution in Asia, and why farmers seem to “resist” the adoption of new technologies and processes – whether in crop varieties, irrigation, mechanization, processing and consumption. A range of “critical factors” emerge from these studies, including gender, age, level of education and access to information, farm size, available credit and labour, access to markets and infrastructure, off-farm income and land tenure.

From land and labour to information, education and training; from credit to seeds and fertilizers: access and availability to all these have been linked to the increased likelihood of adopting new technologies, and may provide clues to understanding – and addressing – the differences between the two continents.

Having your cake and eating it too: technology to do more with less, and to do it better

Today's conventional / mainstream agriculture, which is based on the extensive use of chemical inputs and plant or seed varieties that have been developed in ideal conditions (nutrition, light, temperature, moisture) is not up to the task of reducing rampant poverty in developing countries, especially amidst climate change, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and above all amidst the dwindling capacity of the grower to purchase the improved inputs.

The challenge for “optimal technologies” of the future, therefore, is to increase and optimize crop and livestock yields by capitalizing on renewable resources (or at the very least, by making wise use of existing – and dwindling – resources) while also enhancing and safeguarding people's access and control over these natural resources and opportunities, especially among those who are marginalized or resource-poor.

When one size does NOT fit all...

In terms of successful adaptation and scaling, specificity is everything. Technologies differ (or should differ) depending on the region (climate, resources, human labour, community circumstances, economic/market environment); the type of agriculture (homestead farming vs. commercial/corporate farming); and the “target” user (level of education, skills and awareness of the target group and their capacity to capitalize on the given innovation or technology).

In particular, women farmers are the primary users and major stakeholders for many areas of research application and effect, and technology “solutions” need to do a better job of recognizing their priorities (i.e. labour- and time-saving technologies instead of / in addition to productivity-boosters).

And as in the story of “new and improved equipment” for transplanting rice in Sri Lanka (which had been designed for male farmers, and so turned out to be too heavy and cumbersome for the people who usually transplanted the rice – the women), sometimes, the solutions need to do a better job of recognizing that they're women to begin with...

Harvesting knowledge (and spreading the wealth)

Whether old or new, it's clear that there are many technologies and knowledge-based solutions out there that are working. And though it is important to consider the issue of "specificity" (one size does not fit all), there is much that can be learned, replicated and shared from the approaches of other places as well as of other times. Many farmers' groups, organizations and cooperatives, as well as extension and NGO workers, have expressed the desire for access to relevant and timely information on proven technologies validated by other farmers (whether new or old/traditional) and for a platform or platforms to share their own solutions in return. Such platforms (and processes) could identify, document, and analyze the solutions, and "package" them in a way that allows for easier adaptation and customization across different situations.

In many areas, this need is being addressed:

- The Land to Lab initiative in Kerala, India, collects and documents existing innovations and knowledge practices among local and regional farmers as part of its focus on Farmer Participatory Research.
- Other initiatives such as FAO's Technologies and practices for small agricultural producers (TECA) and the Institute of Hunger Studies' web tool for Social Technologies (STs) act as organized repositories for looking up (and adding to) the knowledge base of innovations and technologies in use at community and small-scale levels, and offer interactive platforms or processes (web, email, etc.) for discussion and exchange on the solutions featured.
- FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) works on the recognition and conservation of "agri-cultural heritage systems" around the world, thereby showcasing the locally adapted management practices and indigenous knowledge that make these situations so successful in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security and quality of life.



One of the best things about the Forum is that it is both easy to follow and practical – it's always clear why you're discussing a certain issue, and for what purpose.

*Estibalitz Morras Dimas
TECA Coordinator, FAO, Italy*


Climate Change and Food Security

Facilitated by Huajun Tang, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE



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Statistics of the discussion

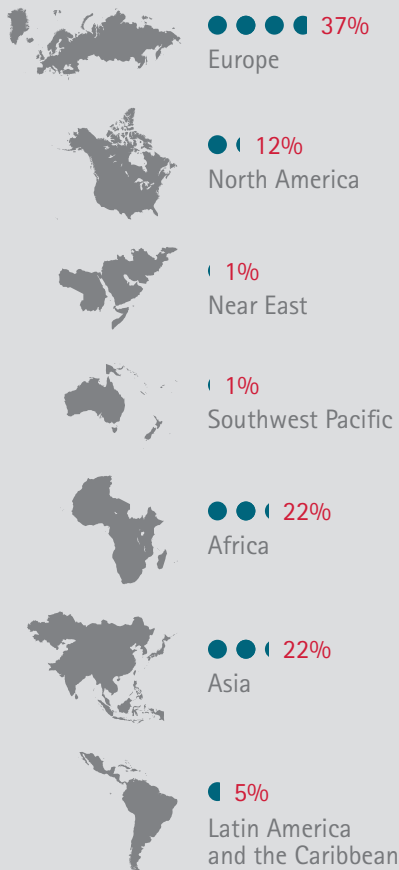
 From 13 June to 07 July 2011

 **124** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Climate Change and Food Security



In October 2010, the CFS requested its HLPE to conduct a study on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition, and the interlinkages between the two. The eventual study would serve to facilitate and inform CFS policy and decision-making, with final findings to be presented at the CFS Plenary session in October 2012.

The HLPE developed a preliminary scope for the study and in June of 2011, this proposed scope was presented via the FSN Forum for open online consultation among a broad range of stakeholders. These included several key communities that were expressly informed and invited to participate, such as the Climate Change Info Mailing List run by the International Institute for Sustainable Development - Reporting Services Division (IISD RS), the 1200 experts of the HLPE Roster and other CFS constituencies; in addition to the FSN Forum community and the general public. The consultation focused on a comprehensive review of the proposed scope, including overall approach, main aspects to be emphasized, and specific elements to be added or removed. The scope focused on four main areas:

- 1. Assessing direct and indirect impacts of climate change on food security and nutrition (including areas and issues of uncertainty).**
- 2. Identifying the most affected and most vulnerable regions and populations.**
- 3. Adaptation to climate change (including observed adaptation, the cost-benefit analysis for adaptation, the role for public and private sectors in adaptation and a comprehensive and dynamic policy approach).**
- 4. Climate change mitigation (including the contribution of agriculture to climate change, mitigation options in agriculture, cost effectiveness and efficient mitigation and a multi-objective policy for climate change mitigation).**
- 5. Recommendations for policies and actions.**

The consultation on Climate Change and Food Security drew 130 contributions in just over three weeks. In particular, many highly relevant international organizations, NGOs, government and civil society institutions chose to submit carefully consolidated, comprehensive responses: from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to CARE International; from the Centre for World Food Studies (SOW-VU) to the

World Food Programme (WFP); and from Farming First to the Third World Network (TWN); the official contributions signaled a high level of readiness and support for the study. Many noted the relevance and timeliness of the study and the unique role that the Committee on World Food Security and the High Level Panel of Experts can play in addressing the crucial connections between climate change, food security and nutrition at a global level.

While the overall approach of the scope was considered appropriate, comprehensive and well-structured, almost every contributor had input towards refinement and revision, and in many cases, towards the actual content of the eventual study itself.

Many called for a specific and rigorous analytical framework to be applied to both the scope and the eventual study. The framework would help to organize the various components of climate change and food security and nutrition in a way that reflects how they relate (where impact, adaptation and mitigation are dynamically interlinked and even cyclical in nature, causes and effects, etc.); and how the various cross-cutting themes (gender, health, livestock, water, etc.) can apply across different parts of the framework to provide meaningful perspectives on both the problems and the recommended solutions.

Beyond the theoretical, the need for concrete solutions was also prevalent, and many contributions featured specific examples for various contexts, both in terms of theme / domain (fisheries / aquaculture, poultry farming, etc.) and in terms of geographic focus (field offices and regional organizations in Africa, Central America, etc.).

Resource Roundup

Many contributors shared links and references to resources that were relevant to the study and the different issues discussed, with several that were particularly relevant to both climate change and food security:

-  [Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change: Outlook for Knowledge, Tools and Action](#)
-  [Climate Change and Food Security: A Framework Document](#)
-  [Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change in Post-Copenhagen Processes – An Information Note](#)
-  [Climate Smart Agriculture: Policies, Practices and Financing for Food Security, Adaptation and Mitigation](#)
-  [Assuring Food Security in Developing Countries under the Challenges of Climate Change: Key Trade and Development Issues of a Fundamental Transformation of Agriculture](#)
-  [Climate Change and Hunger: Responding to the Challenge](#)

Full source details are available in the discussion summary on the website.

• • • THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS • • •

Making it a win-win situation for everyone

While adapting to climate change is good, adapting and mitigating at the same time is even better: policy and programming should focus on adaptation measures that reinforce or support mitigation measures (and vice-versa), and on strategies that that can create "wins" for more than just one area or domain (for example, adaptation / mitigation measures that can address aspects of climate change and food security and nutrition along with poverty alleviation).

One man's mitigation...

It is important to remember that the lines drawn between the various seemingly discrete "components" of any framework that tries to encompass climate change and food security and nutrition (and all the attendant themes, dimensions and domains) are rarely clear-cut: many strategies for dealing with climate change are often combinations of both adaptation and mitigation. And, even when they are separate, these "components" do not work independently of each other, and are often interconnected in ways that can lead to unexpected (and sometimes undesirable) consequences. For example, carbon offsets may be the solution for one town or business, but may cause a whole new problem for a neighbouring village or indigenous community.

So, while many contributions called for applying a clear, defined "framework" to the study, they also touched on how such a framework would need to consider the complex interplay of cause and effect:

- Adaptation and mitigation strategies arise as a consequence of the problems they are trying to address, but they produce their own effects in turn, for which further adaptation or mitigation may be needed.
- Both the impact of climate change, and the effects of any climate change policy, adaptation or mitigation that is developed to respond to it, tend to spread far beyond geographical, thematic or sectoral boundaries.

When "high-level" policy meets "on-the-ground" reality

At all levels of response – from the consolidated inputs of major agencies and NGOs to the more personal perspectives of independent experts and individuals – the timeliness and urgency of climate change and its relationship with food security was broadly acknowledged.

Indeed, several individual contributors linked the discussion to their own immediate environments, and provided compelling "eye-witness accounts" of climate change and its all-too-visible effects on their surroundings: in the Northern Province of Rwanda, where rainfall has increased dramatically, a recent bout of excessive rains resulted in a landslide that buried 14 people; while in Burkina Faso, the severe floods of recent years have destroyed plantations, cropland and other cultivable areas, and swept away whole granaries containing millet – in East Burkina Faso alone, over 5 900 people lost their homes and plantations in 2007, while in the west of the country the rains destroyed 732 hectares of crops and farmland.

Keeping the customer first...

Work on climate change is, all too often, conducted mostly at “expert” and technical levels, without ensuring participation from the productive sector (farmer and producer organizations, small producers, etc.). As a key “target-group” in the development of solutions to climate change and food security, farmers must be involved in the process throughout (rather than having solutions “delivered” to them at the end of the process).

This is especially important when considering that it is the farmers and small-scale producers who are working on the front lines of climate change: they are often the first to experience the impacts of climate change (and its effects on household and community food security) and they have been adapting to many of these impacts and changes for years.

Starting local and finishing local

Firstly, any process towards building policy for climate change and food security and nutrition needs to include a careful review of adaptation and mitigation measures that are current and ongoing, and (for the successful measures), provide assessments on their potential for replication and scalability.

Secondly, this review needs to begin and end with a focus on the local: local knowledge, methods and skills for dealing with and responding to the impacts of climate change among indigenous communities; and local agricultural practices for adaptation and mitigation among small-scale farmers.

- For example, research conducted on household food security in Southern Lao People's Democratic Republic after Typhoon Ketsana showed the extensive knowledge and capacity of the local people in mitigating the impact and consequences of the natural disaster through inter household food reciprocity, small-scale / subsistence coping strategies and community based organization.
- Similarly, for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, where adaptation to rainfall variability is crucial for farming systems, work in Niger has shown that community based natural resource management, and the planting and protection of nitrogen fixing tree species (*Acacia albida*) in farm fields can increase yields and raise groundwater tables; and water spreading techniques (which help to counteract the effect of periodic downpours) have also enabled many farmers to retain enough soil moisture for second-round crops such as short-cycle beans or peas.

And finally, any recommendations for adaptation and mitigation strategies (based on this review) need to be presented in local contexts (in addition to regional, national, and government contexts), so that they are directly relevant to the communities themselves, and so that the communities are empowered to implement them.


Social Protection


Facilitated by Catherine Bertini, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE



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Statistics of the discussion

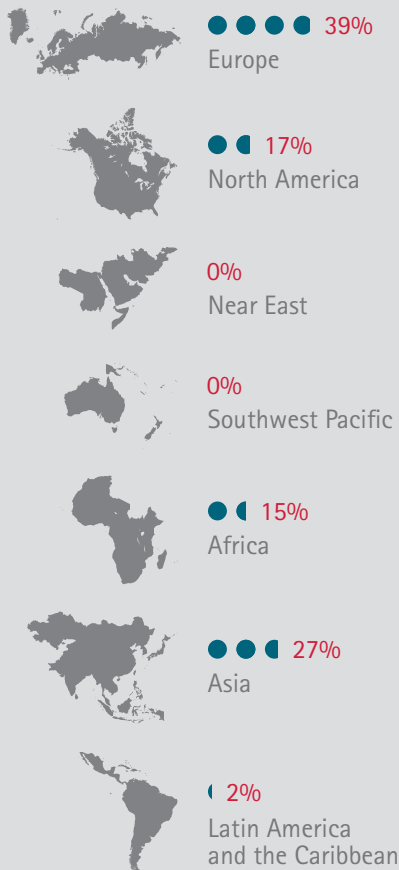
 From 16 August to 27 September 2011

 **41** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Social Protection



In October 2010, the CFS requested its HLPE to conduct a study on social protection in the context of food and nutrition security, and in particular, to assess ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety net programmes and policies across different countries and regions. As with the other key issues identified by the CFS (price volatility, land tenure and international investment in agriculture, climate change) the study and its findings would serve to facilitate and inform CFS policy and decision-making, with a final report to be presented at the CFS Plenary session in October 2012. The eventual report would therefore reference lessons learned from programmes around the world, including relevant experiences from OECD countries, and in general, provide implementable policy options for local communities, governments, NGOs and international organizations.

The HLPE developed a preliminary scope for the study, and in August of 2011, this proposed scope was presented via the FSN Forum for consultation and comprehensive review in terms of overall approach, main aspects to be emphasized, and specific elements to be added or removed. The scope focused on four main areas:

1. **Definition of populations vulnerable to chronic and transitory food and nutrition deficiencies – who, where, why.**
2. **Outline of what is necessary for these populations to become less vulnerable: availability, access and use of food (including economic opportunities, local production and processing, risk management and risk coping strategies, education, health care, etc.).**
3. **Discussion of how and why existing social safety net programmes are useful (with examples of successes and failures from research and impact studies).**
4. **Recommendations for the design and implementation of specific kinds of programmes relevant in specific conditions.**

Additionally, the following aspects were highlighted for specific attention:

- nutrition needs of vulnerable populations in specific lifecycle frameworks (first 1000 days, puberty, pregnancy and breast feeding, elderly, etc.);
- creation of programmes that are sustainable from management and budgetary perspectives;
- how such programmes could be organized, managed and funded;

- special role of women in insuring adequate nutrition for all (including implementation strategies);
- methods for feasible measurement of impact.

The discussion on Social Protection drew a healthy mix of long-time “regulars”, newer members and several first-time contributors, and reflected a wide spectrum of issues relating to the use of social protection and safety nets for food security in both developing and OECD countries. Many different kinds of social protection were discussed, both independently and in the context of specific country examples: Brazil’s well-known Zero Hunger programme and *Bolsa Família* initiative were referenced several times, but contributors also shared examples and experiences from Ethiopia, India, Malawi, Kenya and more. The issue of social protection and the right to food in OECD countries was also raised, especially with regard to the growth of food banks and “corporate” food charity.

For developing countries in particular, considerable debate centered on the use of both conditional and unconditional cash transfers. Many contributors cited the advantages they offer: logistical ease of implementation and high cost effectiveness for direct impact on poverty, health, education and child welfare; and proven multiplier effects far beyond these areas – in the expansion of local economies and market systems, investment in productive activities, building of human capital and agricultural development. But several others expressed concern about trying to address chronic hunger through “quick fix” safety nets, rather than more strategic and long term investments in sustainable food security.

In a larger sense, this debate reflected the divide between the more emergency-based, humanitarian approach and the development approach to social protection. And overall, there was general feeling that this divide should be bridged, and that social protection programming should empower and enable people both in the present and for the future, instead of “locking” them into poverty through long-term dependence and aid.

Beyond food and cash-transfer options, several contributors touched on other components with which social protection could empower vulnerable groups, including employment and labour programmes, transport and fuel, technical equipment and tools, and education and training.

The discussion also reflected several themes that are typical to the food security arena in general: the need for governance; the importance of a rights-based approach; the added complexities of food price volatility, gender, and nutrition; and the need to consider the informal and traditional systems that may be in use.

Overall, there was a strong sense that social protection can and should be a key element within broad, comprehensive and multi-pronged strategies for long-term chronic poverty reduction and – as result – for greater food and nutrition security.

Finding the common ground (and keeping it common)

Common property resources such as land, water, pasture and forested areas are vital to the food security of many vulnerable groups, and often play key roles within larger systems that affect their very survival.

A clear example can be found in livestock: locally adapted animals (including cattle, sheep, goats, buffaloes, camels, or even ducks, swine or poultry) can produce food, fibre, fertilizer and other raw materials; providing regular cash income and even acting as assets or “insurance” – thereby contributing to a system of already-existing safety nets for livestock farmers. However, access to land, water and other common property resources is extremely important for keeping livestock, particularly for women, who are much less likely to own land than men.

Therefore, an understanding of social protection and safety net options for vulnerable groups should consider the natural resources on which the groups jointly depend, as well as any issues of control and access to these common resources.

Governance, governance, governance

As one contributor put it, “safety nets leak”, and all too often issues of accountability, transparency, corruption and power dynamics affect who will (and will not) have access, such that the neediest people end up being the ones who get the least. Whether state-run or otherwise, and whether food-based or otherwise, a comprehensive strategy for good governance is therefore crucial. Such a strategy should incorporate input and representation from all stakeholder levels – including and especially from priority target groups – to ensure that the benefits of social protection actually reach the people that need it most.

Getting there is only half the work

Country-based experiences illustrate the need to study both past and present circumstances for existing social protection systems: In addition to analysing a given programme – including progress, successes and shortcomings – from its launch, it is important to fully explore and understand the timeline of dialogue, debate and policy processes that led to that launch in the first place. This includes the involvement and role of international development partners, regional and local institutions and civil society; and above all, the contributing factors that may have affected political and public buy-in.

Analysis of existing social protection programmes should therefore begin at a point well before their perceived or official beginnings, for a more complete and coherent picture of each case.



The FSN Forum helps to advance our collective thinking about how major food and nutrition issues should be handled.

For example, in the discussion on Social Protection, the exchange with other members on social safety nets helped me to sharpen my thinking, and hopefully it was useful to others as well.

George Kent

Professor (Emeritus) of Political Science, University of Hawaii, United States of America


Global Governance for Food Security


Facilitated by Andrew MacMillan and Hartwig de Haen



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Statistics of the discussion

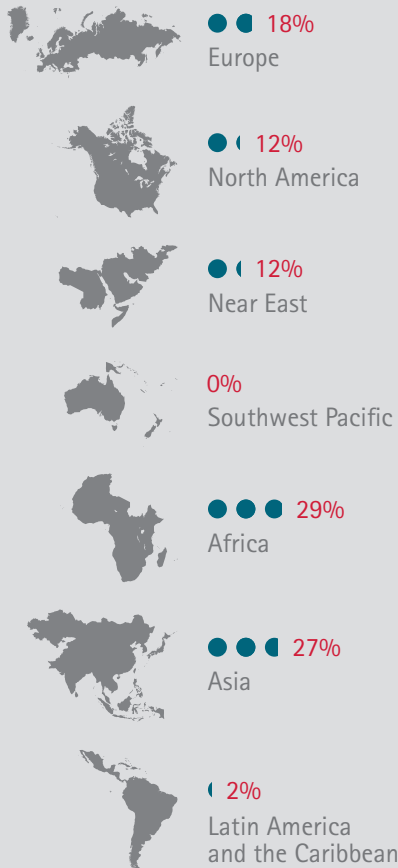
 From 21 April to 15 May 2011

 **49** contributions

Gender



Regions



Affiliations





Global Governance for Food Security



The discussion on global governance for food security was facilitated in tandem by Hartwig de Haen, who served in the past as FAO Assistant Director-General of the Agriculture Department and later of the Economic and Social Development Department; and Andrew MacMillan, former Director of Field Operations at FAO. Both Hartwig and Andrew are still actively involved in the areas of agricultural / development economics, agricultural policy, hunger eradication and food security; and in April 2011, they facilitated an FSN Forum discussion to look at the issue of governance in food and agriculture:

- 1. What are the main services that need to be provided by an adequate global food governance system?**
- 2. To what extent and how effectively are these now provided for by existing institutions? Are there overlaps? Where are the big gaps?**
- 3. What should a global governance system that is able to ensure an adequate and safe food supply for all humans at all times look like? What are the major issues that have to be addressed to put an adequate system in place? Through what processes could the necessary system emerge?**

In just over three weeks, the discussion garnered 45 contributions from 22 countries, with strong representation from government and academic institutions and several inputs from NGOs and civil society.

Most contributions were in-depth and exhaustive in their analysis of the relevant issues, and many included links and references as additional resources. Recurring themes included the need to focus on food distribution (more than food production); the "cause and effect" role of globalization (particularly in terms of industrial farming and public vs. private interests, trade, markets and the recent effects of financial speculation on food prices); and the need for a multidisciplinary approach in treating food security at any level. There were many issues on which the individual contributions reflected a range of differing viewpoints. As Hartwig pointed out in his concluding reflections, this level of dissent and debate very much echoed the difficulties seen in reaching consensus on similar issues within the global governance system itself.

• • • THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS • • •

Starting with subsidiarity, ending with efficiency

There are many aspects of food security that can and should be managed at the country level, rather than the international or intergovernmental level. But, there are also many areas for which a system of transboundary governance is not only well-suited, but crucial: when there are shortfalls in global food stocks; when there are price fluctuations in the world's food and financial markets; when natural disasters strike; and in general, to address those areas that lie beyond the efficient control of national or sub-national authorities in the world's more vulnerable countries. "Subsidiarity" is key to governance: unless the global public good is at stake (or in some cases, unless efficiency is a concern), we should not attempt to do anything at the global level that can be adequately handled at regional, national, local or community level, or that can be addressed appropriately by the private sector, civil society, or existing institutions.

Too many cooks? Considering the "regime complex"

A key obstacle to global governance lies in the issue of the "regime complex". Multiple international institutions are involved in the management of food security (which in itself encompasses multiple areas of policy: development, production, trade, and science, as well as human rights and climate change), without any single entity having clear authority over a given area or aspect. Instead, responsibility is spread across a number of international organizations, causing overlap (and occasionally even conflict) and affecting global policy coherence and progress on food security.

At the same time however, there are benefits to having multiple organizations handling their respective geographic and thematic specializations, and even to having some overlap among them: there can be greater choice and diversity in approaches and available options, and the options themselves can sometimes complement and reinforce each other across various organizations.

Not too global and not too local: an idea for regional governance

Key regional organizations (for example, the African Union for countries in Africa) could be put in charge of food security governance and food distribution for and between the countries in their jurisdiction (for example, through the harmonization of standards, joint agricultural research, trade and transboundary infrastructure). This approach could strike the happy balance between the "global" and "local" extremes of governance. Moreover, it may serve to sidestep the respective drawbacks of each (such as lack of cultural and social specificity for the former; and less control over external influences for the latter), while building on respective strengths of both ("big-picture" strategic planning; self-sustenance and ownership).

The apex approach: ideas for governing food distribution

One approach could be the establishment of an “apex” or focal institution (or the identification of an existing body such as FAO, to act as an apex institution). This institution could then be responsible for ensuring transparent, equitable food distribution and effective access to food for all. As members of this institution; countries with food deficits or surpluses could borrow or “bank” with the common pool for prescribed periods, with accompanying “recovery” programmes for “deficit” countries to focus on capacity development, production planning, technology, etc.

A case study in grassroots governance: the People's Food Policy Project in Canada

The People's Food Policy Project illustrates how many key issues in governance (balancing the top-down “state” approach with the bottom-up “local” approach, engaging and empowering farmers and pastoralists, the right to food approach, etc.) may be brought together and managed successfully. Over the course of two years, the Project engaged and enabled a national food security movement at the grassroots level to examine and develop policies for food sovereignty. People in populated cities and remote communities (including farmers, fishermen and consumers) across Canada discussed the kind of food system they wanted, and contributed ideas towards a series of policy discussion papers. *Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada* was a result of this process, and highlights policy priorities for ensuring adequate amounts of healthy, acceptable and accessible food for all.

Advocacy for real, effective and sustainable action against hunger is complex, takes time and will need still more debate like the FSN Forum.

Hartwig de Haen
Professor (Emeritus) University of Göttingen, Germany





It is very difficult to trace how ideas gain acceptance at the international level. They have a way of spreading, gradually gaining acceptance and then being propagated. We cannot tell at an early stage whether they will germinate and bear fruit, or wither away, but I do think the FSN Forum provides an excellent launching pad for ideas.

I also think that one has to see the FSN Forum in the broader context of sharing ideas and knowledge and contributing to a consensual approach on how to get to grips with a wide range of food security related issues. It has the advantage of including a lot of people, especially in developing countries, who have first-hand experience but can, otherwise, not have their voices heard internationally.

Andrew MacMillan

Agricultural Economist, former Director of FAO's Field Operations Division, Italy



Part Three
Supporting policy processes

For me the most interesting thing about the Forum is the way in which members are invited to participate towards solutions for today's burning issues in social development, agriculture, food security and nutrition. Through the FSN Forum, FAO is able to reach out to relevant stakeholders from all of its member countries, and involve them in its decision-making processes.

This approach also denotes transparency in FAO's activities: as a member of the Forum, I was given the opportunity to hear about the different programmes and projects that are being planned and implemented; and I have learned about institutions and initiatives of the highest importance – such as the CFS and the HLPE – what their duties are, their composition, and so on.



Kodjo Dokodjo

Chief, Division of Agricultural Statistics Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Togo

The CFS Global Strategic Framework



In August of 2011, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) turned to the FSN Forum to help gather inputs from a wide range of stakeholders towards the development of a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF). As defined by the 36th session of CFS, the GSF would serve to improve coordination and guide both policy and action at global, regional and country levels, to prevent future food crises and ensure food security and nutrition for all.

Beyond its explicit role in the development of this important document, the FSN Forum consultation on the GSF served to underscore the priorities of the reformed CFS, as an inclusive platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together on food security and nutrition.

It is vital that the Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition is based on the reality on the ground, drawing on best practices and lessons learned from local experience and the expert advice and opinions of different stakeholders.



Noel De Luna
CFS Chair, 2009-2011

The consultation was based on an annotated outline of the GSF, which focused on the long term challenges and structural causes of food security and malnutrition, on priority issues and policy options, and on the monitoring of progress towards objectives. With support for contributions (and translation) for all six UN languages, the goal was to foster an open and inclusive debate, and this was indeed the case: a total of 116 contributions were received from 49 countries, and featured inputs from government ministries, permanent representations, international organizations, NGOs, civil society and academia. In addition to the contributions sent to the FSN Forum platform, many inputs were also received through parallel discussions conducted through networks and initiatives that partnered in the overall consultation effort, ensuring exposure and input from their respective constituencies; these included the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, Food for the Cities, Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition and Solution Exchange India.

Feedback touched on a wide range of issues, from the name of the framework itself to the scope of its guidelines and recommendations for action at both national and international levels. A number of the structural causes of food insecurity and malnutrition were emphasized or added, including inadequate governance and accountability; reduced investment in small scale agriculture; insufficient attention to the rights of women; insecurity of land tenure and access to resources by vulnerable groups; international trade policies; and financial speculation on food prices. There was a clear call for specific indicators to monitor the impact of the GSF itself, and to help ensure the accountability of CFS and other intergovernmental organizations towards its objectives.

A preliminary summary of results from the consultation was presented to the 37th Session of CFS in October 2011; final findings will inform the work of the CFS Task Team in the development of a first draft of the GSF in early 2012. This "Draft One" document will be presented for further consultation among stakeholders at international and regional levels, towards a refined "Draft Two" document. The CFS Bureau, together with the Advisory Group and Secretariat, will then manage a process towards developing the Final Draft, to be submitted to the 38th Session of CFS for approval in October 2012.

Towards the HLPE Reports: a coalition of the concerned



The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created in October 2009 as an essential element of the CFS Reform, and as the scientific and knowledge-based pillar of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. Launched in 2010 with the appointment of its Steering Committee, the HLPE was tasked with conducting a first set of studies towards formulating policy recommendations for CFS on key issues in world food security: price volatility, land tenure and international investment in agriculture, climate change and social protection.

The HLPE defined a rigorous and structured process to carry out these studies, which included the use of open online consultations, and chose the FSN Forum as the platform from which to conduct them. For each topic, this process included a first consultation for feedback on the terms of reference to be assigned to the HLPE Project Team, followed by a second consultation for input on the version zero draft of the report prepared by the Project Team.

For the first two topics (price volatility, and land tenure and international investment in agriculture), both first- and second- round consultations have been completed, while for the work on climate change and social protection, first- round consultations were held in 2011, and second- round consultations are scheduled for early 2012.

The final HLPE reports *Price volatility* and *Land tenure and international investment in agriculture* were presented at the 37th Session of CFS in October 2011, where Professor MS Swaminathan, Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the HLPE, noted the role of online consultations within the larger context of ensuring the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the HLPE process, as well as its transparency and openness to all sources of knowledge.



The FSN Forum consultations have been extremely successful, and have provided us with a diversity of views, suggestions and constructive criticism. Indeed, the HLPE reports owe their quality and relevance to inputs such as these, received from a broad coalition of those concerned with the eradication of hunger on our planet.

MS Swaminathan
Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the HLPE

Price volatility and food security

The HLPE study on price volatility set out to explore the causes and consequences of excessive price volatility in agriculture, as well as actions, instruments, and institutions for managing both consequences and risks. As suggested by CFS, the study also explored prevention and mitigation for vulnerable producers and consumers, and considered how vulnerable nations and populations can ensure access to food when price volatility causes market disruptions.

The first consultation took place in January / February of 2011, and discussed key policy instruments for reducing the frequency and magnitude of price shocks, managing risk, and strengthening resilience and coping strategies at household, national, regional and international levels. Participants provided feedback on the initial list of 19 policy instruments proposed for the consultation (including ideas on approach and grouping), while also suggesting additions to the list.

With the second consultation in May / June 2011, the version zero draft of the report was presented for in-depth review and comment, both for overall approach and in terms of specific areas needing input (potential sources for assessing the food security situation among vulnerable populations; country experiences to better inform national food security strategies; etc.).

With over 100 contributions (including institutional responses from NGOs, ministries, permanent representations and other government agencies), both consultations reflected the interest and relevance of price volatility to food security and nutrition, as well as the complexity of the issues at hand. For example, considerable attention was given to the issue of regulating speculation in food commodity markets: while some participants highlighted the positive role of financial markets in terms of hedging against price risks and increasing liquidity in the sector, many others emphasized the need for some degree of market regulation (such as greater transparency, limits on transactions, limits on speculation). These included Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, who provided several references for the discussion and overall process, including his briefing note on "Food Commodities Speculation and Food Price Crises".

In general, participants confirmed the need for a strong understanding of the causes behind current and past price spikes in order to better identify appropriate policy responses and recommendations for adaptation, mitigation and management. And for the recommendations themselves, many called for a clear analysis of the various instruments and options, especially in terms of their applications (short- or long-term needs, geographic scope, level and relevance to different stakeholder groups). These and many other recurring themes were reflected in the HLPE Report, including protective trade measures, stocks and food reserves, market speculation, and investment in agriculture.

Land tenure and international investment in agriculture

The second HLPE study mandated by CFS called for analysis and formulation of policy recommendations on land tenure and international investments in agriculture, with a focus on both small-scale and large-scale plantation farming; tools for mapping of available land; and tools for aligning large scale land investments with national food security strategies.

The first consultation took place in January / February of 2011, with feedback and review on the elements identified within the proposed scope of the study (drivers of revived interest in

investment in land and agriculture; existing uses and trends in land and natural resources; technical, political and corporate instruments of influence; and potential recommendations). This was followed up by a second consultation in May / June 2011, where the initial draft of the HLPE report was presented and discussed in detail.

Together, the two rounds of discussions garnered 90 contributions, including several institutional contributions from government and civil society organizations around the world. Both discussions reflected the need for a context-sensitive approach: the danger and difficulty of comparing investment drivers, objectives, instruments and impacts across different economic, social and geographic scenarios; and the rights, obligations and responsibilities of the different stakeholders within their respective roles. The concept of rights was also prevalent in the various contributions, with several participants noting the relevance of including international human rights frameworks and instruments, safeguarding rights for women and indigenous peoples and the right to food in general.

The view from the HLPE Secretariat

We spoke to Vincent Gitz, HLPE Coordinator, about how it all started, and what it's like to work with the FSN Forum:

The HLPE is committed to a scientific and evidence-based process, and as such it needs to be able to look at all the evidence available, even if controversial or contradictory. This is why we decided to use open online consultations as an additional way of bringing a broad diversity of inputs to our work. As a first objective, we needed to reach the HLPE Roster of experts, which consists of about 1200 experts nominated through CFS for this purpose. In using the FSN Forum, we were also able to reach its existing community of individuals and organizations, and this was important to us.

We have been very happy with the level and quality of the responses. The online consultations offer great opportunities for getting important references or documented evidence, but they are also key to the openness and transparency of the HLPE process, in a way that other working methods (closed workshops, etc.) cannot be. Openness and transparency are of increasing importance in international scientific processes. This is something the HLPE has considered from the start, and I think it would benefit many other existing expert processes as well.

A catalyst for change: the rebirth of the AAHM



The Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition (formerly known as the International Alliance Against Hunger) is a global voluntary partnership that brings together multiple stakeholders involved in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, through a network of National and Regional Alliances. The Alliance provides a neutral and open environment for those who run top-down and bottom-up development initiatives, where they can share knowledge, establish networks and, through unity, increase their visibility, recognition and impact in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. And within the context of CFS Reform, the Alliance is particularly relevant to coordination of food security and nutrition at national and regional levels. As noted by Noel De Luna, CFS Chair 2009–2011: *“The CFS Reform is quite emphatic on this point which is, that at country level, the CFS should build on and use existing structures such as the National Alliances against Hunger”*.

In March 2010, the Alliance conducted an online consultation via the FSN Forum, in which members from national and regional alliances exchanged ideas and experiences on their work. Contributions touched on core functions at country level, including advocacy, coordination, networking and partnerships, and accountability mechanisms. In a general sense, the discussion proved highly successful in fostering a sense of shared identity and a more cohesive and coherent network of national and regional alliances, united in the fight against hunger.

The electronic forum is to be congratulated. This process has enabled alliances to have a sense of their combined strength and their readiness to work for food security. It will definitely favor the development of partnerships between alliances as well as experience sharing, leading to greater efficacy in their activities. What may seem insignificant in one place may be insurmountable somewhere else, and they can help each other to succeed.



Etienne Poda
National Alliance Against Hunger, Burkina Faso

More specifically, the online consultation focused on the role of the Alliance in the context of recent changes in global food security institutions and processes (e.g. the High Level Task-Force on Global Food Security, CFS Reform, etc.). In this sense, it served as an important precursor to the First International Alliance Against Hunger Consultation held in June 2010, where over 70 representatives from national and regional alliances around the world met at FAO headquarters to discuss and agree on "The Way Forward" for the Alliance.

We asked Elisa Pozzi, Consultant for the Alliance, how the FSN Forum consultation contributed to the process and outcomes of the conference, and to the rebirth of the Alliance as a whole:

When the Committee on World Food Security reformed in 2009, we knew we had to take some time to re-envision our role in the context of the multi-stakeholder process for decisions at both the international and national level. And so the workshop in June was held for this purpose. But the workshop would not have been the success that it was, without the online consultation that preceded it. The FSN Forum discussion gave us the opportunity to inform and engage with our members in a real, structured conversation about the CFS Reform document and what it meant for us, in a way that would have been impossible via email. It enabled us to get everyone on the same page, and to have a framework and rationale in place for the kinds of discussions we needed to have at the workshop. And of course, it made a difference in the level of communication and teamwork that came afterwards: many of our members said that when they came to the workshop, they felt like they knew each other already! The FSN Forum consultation was really a kind of catalyst for the change and rebirth that the Alliance needed.

A meeting space for methodology: the MAFAP Technical Advisory Network



The Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) project is a joint initiative between FAO and OECD to develop a system of indicators for monitoring African food and agricultural policies and facilitating evidence-based policy dialogue within and between participating sub-Saharan African countries and their development partners. Through its support of decision-making at national, regional and pan-African levels, the project aims to help African policy-makers and other stakeholders ensure that policies and investments are fully supportive of agricultural development and enhanced food security through the sustainable use of natural resources.

In March of 2011, the MAFAP Technical Advisory Network (TAN) was established as a circle of experts from around the world, who have an interest in methodological issues – both from the academic and theoretical perspective and from the practical or field-level implementation perspective – to provide the MAFAP project with technical advice on methodology, and to serve as an informal forum for in-depth technical collaboration and exchange.

The MAFAP TAN chose the FSN Forum as a virtual space in which its network of experts can share best practices, experiences and knowledge; and help ensure the consistency, complementarity and coordination of MAFAP methodology across other policy monitoring and analysis initiatives at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels. Since its inception, the MAFAP TAN has launched two topics:

1. *Incentives and Disincentives for Non-traded Agricultural Products: Which Indicators?*
2. *Towards a Synthetic Indicator of Policy Support: How to Manage Multiple Crops and Steps in the Value Chain.*



The virtual meeting space at the FSN Forum has been a great solution for our group of far-flung experts from different countries, time zones and schedules to communicate on complex methodological issues, in a way that is both flexible and structured.

*Jean Balié
MAFAP Project Manager, FAO, Italy*

Civil society conversations: an action plan for the Caribbean



In October 2010, the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) approved a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP) aimed at ensuring “safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food for the region’s inhabitants at all times, thereby achieving food and nutrition security”. As a next step for 2011, CARICOM was mandated to prepare a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (RFNSAP) for the implementation of the Policy.

CARICOM approached FAO to request technical support in developing a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan, particularly to ensure strong involvement from civil society, and a rights-based approach to food security. FAO provided this assistance through coordinated actions from the FAO–Civil Society collaboration initiative, the Hunger–Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative, Right to Food and the Italian Cooperation.

In order to seek input from key regional civil society partners on the draft Action Plan, an online consultation facilitated by the FSN Forum was held from August to September. 75 organizations representing important constituencies of Caribbean society (including women, small farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, consumers, academia and research) were invited to take part and to share comments towards refinement and finalization of the Action Plan.

Though small in scale, the discussion was a success: a total of 27 contributions from 15 individuals and organizations (including 13 from the Caribbean itself) provided commentary and feedback on various aspects of the draft Action Plan (agriculture, food and nutrition security, trade policy and more), the role of civil society as identified in the Action Plan, and its eventual implementation. These included input from highly relevant CSOs such as the Barbados Association of Non–Governmental Organizations (BANGO), the Caribbean Farmers’ Network (CaFAN) and the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), as well as from academia and the private sector. The contributions from the discussion were used to inform a Validation Workshop conducted in September 2011, and the revised Action Plan was approved by COTED in October 2011, recognizing the key role of civil society in the implementation of the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

The online consultation ensured that awareness was created through a new and different approach for interfacing with an important segment of the stakeholder community and reaching key interlocutors, who would not otherwise be engaged.

*Winston Rudder
Former FAO Subregional Representative for the Caribbean*





Annex

Annex

List of online discussions held in 2010 / 2011



Complete references of all discussions including full contributions received, summaries and bibliographies are available on the FSN Forum website www.fao.org/fsnforum.

Measuring Food and Nutrition Security: what has been your experience?

Facilitated by Winnie Bell and Jennifer Coates

 02.11.2011 to 22.11.2011

Which food and nutrition security indicators are being used? What are the successes and challenges that the food and nutrition security community encounters when working with these indicators?

This discussion was launched in preparation for the *International Scientific Symposium on Food and Nutrition Security Information: from valid measurement to effective decision-making*, FAO 17-19 January, 2012.

Street Foods: the way forward for better food safety and nutrition

Facilitated by Giorgia Nicoló

 26.09.2011 to 21.10.2011

Street foods make up a significant part of the dietary intake of many and provide food generally not used at home such as fruits and vegetables, which serve as healthy complements to the diet. What can be done to increase the vendors' food hygiene knowledge and practices and make sure their role is properly recognized by local authorities?

Social Protection for Food Security: setting the track for the High Level Panel of Experts

Facilitated by Catherine Bertini, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE

 16.08.2011 to 09.09.2011

In October 2010 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to conduct a study on social protection.

The preliminary scope for the study was presented via the FSN Forum for consultation and comprehensive review in terms of overall approach, main aspects to be emphasized, and specific elements to be added or removed.

Climate Change and Food Security: setting the track for the High Level Panel of Experts

Facilitated by Huajun Tang, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE

 13.06.2011 to 07.07.2011

In October 2010 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to conduct a study on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition, and the interlinkages between the two.

The preliminary scope for the study was presented to members of the FSN Forum and many others for comprehensive review.

Land Tenure and International Investments in Agriculture

Facilitated by Rudy Rabbinge, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE

 first discussion 24.01.2011 to 10.02.2011

Facilitated by Camilla Toulmin, Jun Borras, Prem Bindraban, Sergio Sauer, Esther Mwangi, HLPE Project Team members


 second discussion 20.05.2011 to 03.06.2011

In October 2010 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to conduct a study on Land Tenure and International Investments in Agriculture.

The HLPE of the CFS received the mandate to undertake analysis and formulate policy recommendations on land tenure and international investments in agriculture and submitted both the scope and the version zero draft of the study for consultation.

Price Volatility

Facilitated by Sheryl Hendriks, HLPE Steering Committee member on behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE

 first discussion 24.01.2011 to 10.02.2011

Facilitated by Benoit Daviron, Sophia Murphy, Niama Nango Dembele, Shahidur Rashid, HLPE Project Team members

 second discussion 11.05.2011 to 03.06.2011

The HLPE of the CFS was mandated with carrying out a study on price volatility in agriculture. Has the HLPE identified the key policy instruments to reduce the frequency and magnitude of price shocks, manage risk, strengthen coping strategies and improving resilience at all levels? Do you have any innovative ideas of possible examples of these policy instruments?

Both the scope of the study and the version zero draft were submitted for consultation.

Global Governance for Food Security: are the current arrangements fit for the job?

Facilitated by Andrew MacMillan and Hartwig de Haen

 21.04.2011 to 15.05.2011

One of the consequences of the 2007/08 food price crisis was the emergence of a number of new institutions and initiatives that were intended to strengthen global capacities to respond to such situations.

FSN Forum members were invited to share views on how an effective global food governance system should work and on what major issues are to be addressed in order to ensure an adequate and safe food supply for all humans at all times.

Women in Agriculture and Food Security: how can we turn rhetoric into reality?

Facilitated by Jennie Dey de Pryck

 07.03.2011 to 29.03.2011

Women make significant contributions to the rural economy in developing countries, however their yields are on average around 20–30 percent lower than men's. What are the obstacles that women face, and most importantly what are the policies, programs and projects that can unleash their potential to boost food security and to take part in economic and social development?

The discussion was launched upon the release of the State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011 report on *Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development*.

Addressing Food Security in Biofuel Certification

Facilitated by Andrea Rossi

 10.01.2011 to 24.01.2011

The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) has developed a voluntary, third-party certification system for biofuel sustainability which encompasses environmental, social and economic principles and criteria, including food security.

Does the RSB standard adequately address the potential negative impacts of biofuel production on local food security?

From Repeated Crisis to Long Term Food Security

Facilitated by Barbara Stocking

 07.12.2010 to 21.01.2011

Protracted crises affect 22 countries worldwide and pose an ongoing and fundamental threat to both lives and livelihoods, from which recovery becomes progressively more difficult over time.

While many solutions are well known or have been at least partially adopted, there are evident barriers to effective programming that are worth investigating.

The discussion was launched as a follow up to the report on the *State of Food Insecurity 2010*.

Improving the Quality and Impact of Food Security Programming in Emergencies: the role of food security and nutrition response analysis

Facilitated by Neil Marsland

 22.11.2010 to 31.12.2010

Responses to food insecurity and malnutrition in emergencies have expanded dramatically in the past 5–10 years and improved needs assessment has increased willingness of donors to fund new alternatives to general food distribution and targeted feeding programs.

However, the analytical process required to make intelligent choices among these new options has not always kept up. How can this process be improved?

Do Current Food Security Concepts Serve the Fight Against Hunger?

Facilitated by Mark Gibson

 10.11.2010 to 23.11.2010

Confusion and lack of consensus still exist over conceptualizing and dealing with the problems of Food Security.

The complex interplay and multi-dimensionality of factors that define food security is both the cause of much misunderstanding and the barrier to any real consensual solution. How can we improve this situation and what role do Food Security frameworks play?

FAOSTAT User Dialogue 2010

Facilitated by Kafkas Caprazli

 20.10.2010 to 20.11.2010

This consultation was targeted at FAOSTAT users with the aim to measure satisfaction, better understand changing needs and unveil areas of improvement.

Measuring the Impacts of Bioenergy Production on Food Security

Facilitated by Andrea Rossi

 04.10.2010 to 01.11.2010

FAO's Bioenergy and Food Security Criteria and Indicators (BEFSCI) project is developing a set of criteria, indicators, good practices and policy options on sustainable bioenergy production that safeguards and, if possible, fosters food security.

Comments and inputs on a set of "core" indicators that governments could use (on a voluntary basis) to monitor the impacts of modern bioenergy production on food security were sought.

How to Better Understand and Respond to the Vulnerability of Households in the Sahel and in West Africa

Facilitated by Jean Moussa Traoré

 06.09.2010 to 27.09.2010

Year after year, the communities of Sahelian West Africa (Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali) face hardships due to drought despite all the aid awarded by international organizations.

Lack of understanding of the communities' societies and a fragmented approach seem to be among the causes. What can we do to increase the impact of assistance programmes and reduce the vulnerability of these households?

Promoting Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Food Security and Agricultural Development Programmes and Policies

Facilitated by James Edge

 08.07.2010 to 28.07.2010

For decades the international disability movement has been saying that disability is a cause of poverty, that poverty often leads to disability and that disabled people are among the poorest of the poor in any country. What efforts are being taken to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities into policies and programmes related to food security and nutrition?

Rural Radio and Agricultural Development: linking farmers, extension workers and researchers

Facilitated by John Cheburet

 07.06.2010 to 05.07.2010

Broadcast media play a big role in disseminating information about agricultural innovations and good practices while seeking to engage farmers and stakeholders in interactive discussions. What are the experiences, major areas of potential and challenges when building relationships between the broadcasters, extension officers and farmers?

Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

Facilitated by André Croppenstedt

 24.05.2010 to 11.06.2010

In preparation for the report on the State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011 participants provided case studies or examples of best practices that have made a significant difference to rural women in developing countries on a large-scale.

What Do the Rural Poor do for a Living? Implications for poverty and food security policies

Facilitated by Alberto Zezza, Katia Covarrubias, Ana Paula de la O Campos, Carly Petracco and Luca Tasciotti

 05.05.2010 to 04.06.2010

How diverse are rural livelihoods and incomes? Are different types of rural households differently equipped for facing food and financial crises? FAO's Rural Income Generating Activities' (RIGA) project team team invited FSN Forum members to share country specific case studies as well as general inputs.

Supporting Small-Scale Farmers to Access Value-Added Agribusiness and Other Market Opportunities

Facilitated by Chris Ramezanpour

 26.04.2010 to 17.05.2010

What are the ingredients of successful agribusiness initiatives for small-scale farmers in developing countries? How to face the numerous challenges in supporting farmers willing to market their products further down the supply chain?

Agricultural Technologies and Innovation: opportunities for making a difference

Facilitated by Peter Steele

 06.04.2010 - 10.05.2010

How can we make the best use of agricultural technology to achieve food security? Is there still a role for older technologies and for traditional approaches? Or should embracing industrial production systems be the way forward?

Livestock Keepers' Rights: an important concept for food security?

Facilitated by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

 08.03.2010 to 29.03.2010

Can Livestock Keepers' Rights help in improving food security for people living in marginal lands? Evidence of the importance of small-scale livestock production systems making use of uncultivable lands and crops is strong; should they be given prominence over commercial producers, producing large amounts of cheap animal protein based on imported breeds and imported feed?

Taking Stock of Existing Work on Food and Agricultural Policies in Africa

Facilitated by Jean Balié

 15.02.2010 to 15.03.2010

Against the background of the new project Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) jointly implemented by FAO and OECD, FSN Forum members were invited to point out existing policy monitoring and policy analysis activities in Africa.

Combining Income Generation and Food Access for Vulnerable Populations

Facilitated by Danuta Chmielewska

 25.01.2010 to 15.02.2010

FSN Forum members were invited to share ideas and experiences that combine market access and income generation for smallholder farmers with food access for vulnerable populations.

Strengthening Food Security by Empowering Farmers to Contribute to Seed Biodiversity

Facilitated by Maria van Heemstra

 12.01.2010 to 08.02.2010

FSN Forum members were invited to discuss the trends affecting agriculture which lead to expanding monocultures and the increased concentration of seed production in the hands of a few corporations: how can we protect biodiversity, empower farmers and increase food security?



Global
Forum
on Food Security
and Nutrition



Knowledge is only effective when it is shared and made available to the broadest possible range of people.

This is especially true when aiming at effectively combating worldwide hunger and malnutrition which multidimensional causes require being always well informed on a wide range variety of subjects and trends and to be able to join the international discourse. With this in mind the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition was launched in 2007 to bring together academics, researcher and development practitioners for facilitated online discussion and knowledge sharing.

This publication aims at exploring the Forum's activities, to provide a taste of what is happening within the Forum and, most importantly, of what can happen beyond it.

It was prepared with the support of the project "Coherent Food Security Responses: Incorporating Right to Food into Global and Regional Food Security Initiatives" funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).



FSN Forum website:
www.fao.org/fsnforum

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