

MALTA'S COMMENTS ON THE HPE-FSN REPORT #18

Malta welcomes the detailed report produced by High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition named 'Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition'. The report is very detailed and provides an excellent background of the drivers of inequality which in turn allows us, as policy makers, to produce effective policies which would allow us to reduce inequalities in food security and nutrition in real terms. As stated by the World Bank: 'Growth in the agriculture sector is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors'. Therefore policy changes in our food systems to meet the new realities and reduce archaic inequalities are a must not a choice.

It is also highly appreciated that the report acknowledges and stresses the fact that there should be no 'one size fits all policy' and that the local context with its unique challenges and possibly advantages, is given greater acknowledgment than ever. As one of the smallest nations in the world with its geographical constraints, Malta welcomes this change.

Malta would like to see further specific recommendations for equity-sensitive actions to address Food Security and Nutrition inequalities especially in relation to section 6 which concern: States and international organizations should embed an equity focus into trade, investment and debt governance related to Food Security and Nutrition. As stated previously, the local context is very important and obviously the realities that small nations face are very different from those of large nations and therefore the appropriate consideration to the different nations local context should be taken into account when devising trade agreements. Moreover, due consideration should be given to the promotion of the cultivation of nutrient dense food and maybe disincentive the cultivation of less nutrient foods which is using more land than it is sustainable. Furthermore, any changes to existing agricultural subsidies as suggested in 6 (v) should be carefully studied so as to ensure that we do not create new inequalities.

Another possible point of further consideration is the role of women in the food systems. The document already stresses the fact that women need to have equal access to property, markets and finance through various recommendations. However, in addition to the equal access, we must also look at the very specific role that the majority of women still play in our societies. Usually, the women are the managers of the household especially when it comes to food. Therefore, any policies that are enacted should be intertwined with this reality. If we can ensure, that women have the knowledge and access to choose nutrient dense food as their food of choice, if we can build on this platform, the food system will automatically become more resilient. If we can influence the demand, the supply will in turn be influenced, which would mean further nutrient dense food at possibly lower prices as suggested in recommendation 3(2). At the same time, we must ensure and despite the low prices, the farmer must receive his fair share for the output that he has produced.

The document has several important recommendations, some may seem idealistic, however with careful studied steps and a sincere coordinated effort by all nations, reducing the systematic inequalities which have plagued our food systems for centuries, should not remain unreachable.