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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security  
challenges**

SEC(2010)379

## 1. RATIONALE

In recent years, hunger and malnutrition have increased; in 2010, over 1 billion people are considered to be food insecure. Food insecurity affects human development, social and political stability, and progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Fragile states in particular encounter severe difficulties in achieving MDG 1 – eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Soaring food prices on global markets in 2007-08 sparked a rethink of global food security. The United Nations (UN) High Level Task Force (HLTF) on the Global Food Security Crisis was set up to enhance coordination within the UN; the Global Partnership on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (GPAFSN) was launched; and G8 leaders agreed a comprehensive agenda on food security at the Summit in L'Aquila in 2009.

The European Union (EU) reacted to the growing food security challenges with an additional €1 billion 'Food Facility'<sup>1</sup> as a temporary measure to support those developing countries worst affected. The EU and its Member States are, and have been for many years, the most important and reliable players in world food security, both financially and politically.

Recent developments and future challenges require a new common food security policy, further strengthening EU leadership in the global food security agenda, and improving the effectiveness of EU assistance, in line with the Lisbon Treaty<sup>2</sup>, the EU2020 initiative<sup>3</sup> and the European Consensus on Development<sup>4</sup>. Future food security challenges include population growth, pressures on natural resources and ecosystem services, and adverse impacts of climate change on agriculture, affecting growing conditions and making adaptation measures necessary. Moreover, key issues in the current food security agenda, such as nutrition, price volatility, social protection and safety nets, biofuels, food safety, research and innovation, large-scale land acquisition, and the “Right to Food” concept<sup>5</sup> need integration into an overall policy framework.

The objective of this Communication is to provide a common policy framework for the EU and its Member States in the fight against world hunger and malnutrition, thereby contributing towards achieving MDG 1. It is coherent with other thematic papers (on education, health, gender and tax governance) and the 2010 Spring Development package, which together set out an EU position for the UN High Level Event on MDGs in September 2010. This Communication is complemented by a Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance<sup>6</sup>, which focuses on emergency and post-emergency contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2010)81 for progress report.

<sup>2</sup> Article 210

<sup>3</sup> COM(2010) 2020

<sup>4</sup> 2006/C 46/01.

<sup>5</sup> Article 11 of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (1966/1976).

<sup>6</sup> COM(2010)126

## 2. A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO FOOD SECURITY

The proposed policy framework addresses food security challenges in developing countries in both rural and urban contexts across the internationally recognised four pillars<sup>7</sup> by: 1) increasing availability of food; 2) improving access to food; 3) improving nutritional adequacy of food intake; and 4) enhancing crisis prevention and management. It is based on the Rome principles on food security.<sup>8</sup> In particular it recognises that food security strategies need be country-owned and country-specific, elaborating an appropriate balance between support to national production and covering food needs through trade.

Progress on food security and achieving MDG1 has been uneven geographically and between population groups. Although there are food security challenges across the world, most progress remains to be made in Africa and in countries in fragile situations. According to the 2009 MDG Report<sup>9</sup>, the proportion of undernourished population in Sub-Saharan Africa, decreased from 32% (1990-92) to 29% in 2008. The comparable figures for Southern Asia, the region with the second highest undernourishment rates, were 24% and 21% respectively.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the latest figures for fragile countries show a rate of undernourishment of 31.4% compared to 14.5% for non fragile countries. While malnutrition is still predominantly a rural phenomenon, urbanisation implies that, in the longer run, food insecurity is likely to become more pressing in urban areas.

EU action needs to give priority to those food insecure countries most off-track in reaching MDG1, in particular in Africa, but also South Asia and elsewhere (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, Nepal, Timor Leste)<sup>11</sup>. Given the nature of related MDGs that are also off-track, a specific investment in women will be required<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, evidence<sup>13</sup> shows that investments in the smallholder sector yield the best returns in terms of poverty reduction and growth. This new EU framework therefore concentrates on enhancing incomes of smallholder farmers and the resilience of vulnerable communities, supporting the resolve of countries that prioritise agriculture and food security in their development efforts.

### 2.1. Increasing availability of food

World population is estimated to reach 9 billion by 2050 and, as diets change and incomes increase, demand for food is likely to grow by 70%<sup>14</sup>. This requires accelerated agricultural production growth, including in countries where populations grow fastest. In many of those countries, natural resource limitations, exacerbated by climate change, place increasing demands on the efficient use of those resources.

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<sup>7</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). 1996. Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action.

<sup>8</sup> Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> UN, the Millennium Development Goals Report 2009.

<sup>10</sup> In absolute numbers, more than half of the world's undernourished (642 million in 2009) are living in Asia and the Pacific; proportionally, figures are considerably higher in Africa where progress has also been less pronounced in the last decade.

<sup>11</sup> UN statistics on progress towards the MDGs, see [www.devinformo.info/mdginformo2009/](http://www.devinformo.info/mdginformo2009/)

<sup>12</sup> See also SEC(2010) 265

<sup>13</sup> World Bank – World Development Report 2008.

<sup>14</sup> FAO 2009. How to feed the world in 2050.

Most of the poor and hungry in the world live in rural areas, where agriculture - including crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry - forms the main economic activity. Small-scale farming is dominant: about 85% of farmers in developing countries produce on less than 2 hectares of land. Mixed crop/livestock smallholding systems produce about half of the world's food.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, sustainable small-scale food production should be the focus of EU assistance to increase availability of food in developing countries. It has multiple effects of enhancing incomes and resilience for rural producers, making food available for consumers, and maintaining or enhancing environmental quality. When supporting small-scale agriculture EU assistance should prioritise intensification approaches that are sustainable and ecologically efficient, respecting the diverse functions of agriculture. This means *inter alia* optimising agri-inputs, integrated pest management, improved soil and water management and stress resistant crop varieties<sup>16</sup>. For this approach to be successful, production needs to be seen in a value chain context, with adequate access to financing, processing and markets, where small and medium enterprises and rural micro-finance can play a key role. Under the right conditions, public-private partnerships can play an important role in boosting agricultural productivity. The EU and its Member States should also support initiatives that reduce post-harvest losses, enhance storage capacity and address food safety and animal health concerns.

Secure access to land and secure land tenure and use rights are prerequisites for higher productivity of small holder farmers. Effective national land policies and laws are essential, requiring governments to take priority action on land. Where countries develop policies on agriculture, land, and biofuels the EU and its Member States should advocate that these policies address concerns over availability and access to food and stimulate the integration of smallholder farmers in production chains.

Moreover, internationally recognised principles should guide investors, host countries and other stakeholders towards investments in agriculture that respect human rights, livelihoods and resources. The EU and its Member States should support the development of internationally agreed principles for responsible investments in agricultural land, building upon existing Land Policy Guidelines.<sup>17</sup> In Africa, implementation of the 2009 Land Policy Guidelines<sup>18</sup> will be supported. Governments in partner countries, farmer organisations and other stakeholders will be encouraged to make informed choices that ensure sustainability of foreign investments so as to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits for the country.

Increasing food availability implies more demand-driven research and innovation in the public domain, giving sufficient attention to traditional knowledge and diversified food crops (including local varieties), and making sure that innovations are accessible to farmers and suited to their needs. The EU and its Member States should support research and innovation which have clear benefits for smallholder farmers, including strengthening adaptation to climate change and improving tolerance to stresses, drought and floods, while maintaining a wide biodiversity of crops and varieties and access to them. Support should take account of the expressed needs and concerns of beneficiary countries, based on the availability for them

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<sup>15</sup> *Science* 12 February 2010: pp 822-825.

<sup>16</sup> International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Including 'EU Guidelines for support to land policy design and land policy reform processes in developing countries' of 2004.

<sup>18</sup> AU/ADB/ECA, Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, supported by the AU Summit of July 2009.

of unbiased information on benefits and risks of any new technologies, as well as sound national regulatory frameworks and the capacity to enforce them. Intellectual property regimes that maximise the access of poor farmers to new technologies and inputs should also be supported. Moreover, synergies between climate change adaptation and mitigation should be explored together with the development of incentive structures, for instance by linking agriculture to the carbon markets.

International trade can substantially contribute to food availability by increasing the amount and by broadening the variety of food on the market. Food availability can also be enhanced by regional integration of agricultural and food markets, facilitating trade flows from surplus to deficit areas. The EU and its Member States should support standardisation and harmonisation of policies, rules and regulations, towards regionally integrated agricultural policies. Moreover, the EU and its Member States acknowledge that given food security concerns, whether at a national or regional level, developing countries can make use of existing trade policy space, including through border measures. The objective should be to aim at a sustainable agri-food chain.

## **2.2. Improving access to food**

Access to food should be enhanced primarily by improving employment and income-earning opportunities in both rural and urban areas, including through diversification and trade, thus making food more affordable for a larger number of people. This should be complemented by social transfer mechanisms. The EU and its Member States should assist partner countries in establishing and operating social mechanisms in support of vulnerable population groups, especially women. Experiences on successful mechanisms will be shared and operational systems will be supported. Due attention will be given to exit strategies from safety nets. Mechanisms will need to be effective, affordable and flexible, allowing for quick expansion in times of crisis. They should usually involve an important nutritional dimension, particularly assisting those for whom appropriate nutrition will have positive effects on the achievements of MDGs 4 (reducing child mortality) and 5 (improving maternal health).

In rural areas, employment could be created through agro-processing, mainly in small and medium sized enterprises and facilitated by improved access to financial services. In addition, rural safety nets<sup>19</sup> could be developed for those vulnerable households that are able to provide labour. Productive safety nets will have the dual benefit of improving rural production conditions and enhancing direct access to food.

In general, access to food can be improved by applying the "Right-to-Food" approach, as outlined in the *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the Right to Food in the context of national food security*<sup>20</sup>. The EU and its Member States should support its further application in developing countries, including "right-to-food" based political and legal frameworks. This means supporting strategies which tackle the root causes of hunger, and empowerment of marginalised groups in the design, implementation and monitoring of national programmes, as well as establishing and strengthening redress mechanisms.

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<sup>19</sup> Including 'productive' ones that use labour for rural infrastructure construction or maintenance.  
<sup>20</sup> adopted in 2004 by the FAO Council

### 2.3. Improving nutritional adequacy of food intake

Malnutrition is estimated to be responsible for 3.5 million mother and child deaths per year<sup>21</sup> and for one-third of the disease burden amongst children under five. Vitamin and mineral deficiencies<sup>22</sup> affect up to two billion people worldwide. The most harmful effects of malnutrition occur during pregnancy and during the first two years of life; its impact on physical and cognitive development is often irreversible. Priority needs to be given to interventions targeting pregnant and lactating women as well as children under five (with stronger emphasis on those under the age of two).<sup>23</sup>

The EU and its Member States should support the formulation of nutrition policies and strategies, nutrition-training, education, and the setting up of coordination mechanisms between agriculture, health, education, and social protection sectors. Future agriculture programmes should include a nutritional dimension. This could mean strengthening diversification of smallholder agriculture, promoting production of micronutrient-rich food, especially local varieties and species, monitoring of nutrition related outcomes, and/or supporting agricultural research conducted from a nutrition perspective.

Political leadership and multi-sectoral coordination at country level, leading to integrated multi-sectoral action, are crucial in integrating nutrition into a country's food security strategy and programmes. The EU and its Member States should promote links with national health strategies that include nutrition-related basic services and monitoring of nutrition status in the population.

### 2.4 Improving crisis prevention and management

Rural producers and communities need to be resilient against the effects of food-related crises. While short term responses to crises often require mobilisation of ad hoc humanitarian instruments, other mechanisms and capacities need to be built and maintained to reduce the risks of crises occurring and to manage their effects. Close linkage between humanitarian and development actors and instruments is essential and should be promoted using Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) principles.

The EU and its Member States should step up efforts in supporting regional integration in developing countries, as closer regional integration forms another means of preventing economic, political and food security crises, and of mitigating their effects.

National or regional early warning systems capable of predicting imminent disasters need to be strengthened or developed where they do not exist, and better linked to decision making and response organisations. Linking weather data with nutritional information, crops and animal disease outbreaks and market prices, the systems need to draw their data from all levels, including community-level. The EU and its Member States should support decision-linked monitoring and information systems, including through the work of the Commission.<sup>24</sup>

Policies to address the challenge of price volatility can either tackle volatility itself, or its impacts. To mitigate volatility, the stock-to-use ratio of food products needs to be improved

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<sup>21</sup> Lancet 2008; 371: pp 243–60.

<sup>22</sup> iodine, iron, zinc, vitamin A, B and other vitamins etc

<sup>23</sup> COM(2010)xxx 'The EU role in Global Health'

<sup>24</sup> See joint work on IPC (Integrated food security Phase Classification), see <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>

by creating conditions for production increases and for adequate stock levels to be kept, mainly by private traders. Moreover, export restrictions of basic food products should be discouraged. The EU and its Member States should contribute to improved food market functioning at global, regional and national levels. This will include responding through market transparency (information on production, reserves, prices, etc.), promoting storage, and local/national food reserves where appropriate and feasible. The impacts of price volatility can be mitigated by using a range of measures, including the establishment of scalable safety nets, food security information systems, use of (weather, index) insurance, and an enhanced capacity to use price risk management instruments.

### **3. MAXIMISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOOD SECURITY INVESTMENTS**

Three sets of conditions for maximising the effectiveness of food security investments require a focus by the EU and its Member States.

#### **3.1. National and regional agriculture and food security policies and strategies**

In order to achieve tangible results, assistance programmes need to support national and regional policies and reforms on agriculture and food security, and related areas such as land, water and biofuels, taking full account of climate change challenges. These in turn need to be an integral part of overall poverty reduction strategies. Food security objectives and targets should also be better integrated into partner countries' other sector policies in such areas as transport, infrastructure, fisheries, health and education. It is essential that farmer organisations, civil society, private sector, vulnerable groups and other stakeholders be involved in the development and review of these policies. In this respect, EU development assistance should be used to support policy development capacity and inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms.

In Africa, the above principles have been enshrined in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), supported by the EU and its Member States since 2007<sup>25</sup>. EU support to CAADP should be intensified. In Asia, regional cooperation initiatives on nutrition should be reinforced.

#### **3.2. Harmonising EU interventions**

The EU approach to food security in developing countries needs to be anchored in the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, as well as in the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour. The EU and its Member States should identify regions and countries where tasks will be divided based on comparative advantage and coordinate actions under the guidance of a lead donor.

Both the EU and its Member States have several policy frameworks and financing instruments to assist partner countries in coping with food insecurity. Greater harmonisation of policies and greater complementarity of instruments, as well as coordination with private investments, should lead to more effective action.

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<sup>25</sup> COM(2007)440

Policy Coherence for Development<sup>26</sup> (PCD) on food security will be promoted through a range of policy instruments, including agriculture, trade, fisheries, climate change, environment and research. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has enhanced coherence, and future reforms will continue to take global food security objectives into account. Future reform of the Common Fisheries Policy will further increase coherence between Europe's fishing policies and practices and development objectives. Finally, a balanced, comprehensive and ambitious conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda would strengthen the international trading system, with beneficial effects on food security.

### **3.3. Improving the coherence of the international governance system**

The EU and its Member States should enhance the coherence of international food security governance and support the rapid reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the central body on food security. The reformed CFS should aim to obtain an oversight role in other specific domains with implications for food security, including food aid and nutrition.

There is a need to further rationalise the priorities of the three Rome-based UN agencies (FAO, WFP, IFAD) and improve their cooperation to create synergies. The reform of the UN system and the ongoing review of the role and priorities of FAO offer opportunities to improve quality and effectiveness. The EU should continue its close collaboration with the UN Secretary General on food security issues and strengthen its dialogue with the Rome-based agencies, supporting closer coordination between them and, where necessary, the re-focusing of their mandates and activities on their comparative advantages; FAO mainly on knowledge and policy advice, IFAD on long-term sustainable investment and WFP on situations of emergency and fragility.

## **4. PRIORITIES**

Ten years on from the adoption of the MDGs, the EU needs to step up cooperation on food security. Within this policy framework, the EU's priority should be to support food security in fragile countries. This is a particular priority in Africa, where nearly 80% of malnourished people live in fragile countries, and in parts of South Asia. To be effective, assistance needs to be adapted to the country context and combine policy and strategy development with empowerment of the most vulnerable. While all four pillars should be addressed, the EU should prioritise four broad and related dimensions: smallholder agricultural development, governance, regional integration, and assistance mechanisms for vulnerable populations. In these areas, the EU and its Member States should:

### **4.1. Improve smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods**

- Focus on ecologically efficient agricultural intensification for smallholder farmers, and in particular women, by providing support for effective and sustainable national policies, strategies and legal frameworks, and for equitable and sustainable access to resources, including land, water, (micro) credit and other agricultural inputs.
- Increase substantially support to demand-led agricultural research for development, extension and innovation, aiming to reach 50% by 2015. Research in the public domain should rely on traditional knowledge and on new

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<sup>26</sup> PCD Work programme 2010-2013', April 2010

technologies. It should not promote technologies that are not sustainable or that are incompatible with national capacities to regulate and manage risks.

- Actively support greater participation of civil society and farmer organisations in policy making and research programmes and increase their involvement in the implementation and evaluation of government programmes. In this context linkages between EU farmer organisations and those from developing countries should be promoted.
- Along with partners, improve the regulatory and institutional conditions for responsible private investments in all stages of the agricultural value chain and stimulate public-private investments. Progress will be monitored and discussed in the framework of Governance Action Plans.

#### **4.2. Support effective governance**

- Substantially increase support to CAADP applying effective division of labour in all agriculture-based Sub-Saharan African countries by 2015.
- Launch a joint initiative with the AU to accelerate the implementation of the African Land Policy Guidelines. This should include a roadmap to implement the principles and best practices for sustainable large scale investments in farm land.
- Support national and international initiatives for the definition of principles and codes of conduct governing sustainable large scale domestic and foreign investments in farm land, focusing on the protection of land rights, secure access to land and other natural resources for smallholder farmers and pastoral communities and on sustainable management of these resources.
- At the world level, support the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to become the pivotal institution to coordinate global food security initiatives.
- Support closer coordination between the Rome-based UN agencies.

#### **4.3. Support regional agriculture and food security policies**

- Support the development and implementation of regional level agricultural policies and strategies, including on livestock management and food safety, to step up integration of regional food and agricultural markets. Enhance policy dialogue with regional organisations on agriculture, food security and nutrition.
- Reinforce the regional and national information systems in support of agriculture, food security and nutrition policies, and those for early warning purposes.

#### **4.4. Strengthen assistance mechanisms for vulnerable population groups**

- Support countries to establish and operate targeted and flexible social transfer policies adapted to local contexts. Where feasible, social assistance should provide opportunities for recipients to graduate into an income earning situation securing sustainable access to food.
- Promote better integration of nutrition in development policies, including in education and health and related capacity building.
- Provide specific support to countries in transition and fragility using LRRD principles.