

CAMPAIGN COMMENTS TO THE DOCUMENT

“Secretariat contribution to defining the objectives and possible decisions of the 2009 World Summit on Food Security”

The organizations which have been boosting the campaign “The Right to Food. Urgent”, based upon the contribution document written by the Secretariat of the World Summit Meeting on Food Security, want to add the following comments within the original lay-out of the document.

Introduction

Summary of the main points of the document:

1. To secure a broad consensus on the total eradication of hunger from the world by 2025.
2. Acknowledgement of the failure of the two previous World Summits on Food Security (1996 and 2002); it is unlikely that the objective of reducing the number of hungry people to 420 million will be achieved. Why? The decisions made were not followed by action commensurate with achieving the goals set.
3. Over 1 billion people are suffering from hunger nowadays. Unacceptable.
4. Food security is essential to poverty reduction, good public health, sustainable economic growth and world peace and security. There are still 31 countries in the world in a situation of food crisis requiring emergency assistance.
5. Reasons: Negligence in the agriculture development policies. There is a need to tackle the deep-rooted and diverse causes of food insecurity.
6. Compromise to eradicate hunger from the face of the world by 2025 and securing enough food for an increased population by 2050.

Comments:

In the World Summit meeting held in Rome in 1996, a compromise was made to reduce by half –before 2015-, the number of people under a chronic hunger situation (taking the 1990 figures into account, that is to say, reducing to 400 million people). Since that compromise the number of hungry people has increased year after year until exceeding the 1 billion amounts in 2009.

Even though the objective was restated 5 years afterwards in the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in 2002, and even though it was established in the 2000 Millennium Development Goals to reduce hunger in the world (precisely, to reduce by half the percentage of people living in a chronic hunger situation, taking the 1990 figures into account), the failure is evident.

After the recent major international meetings – the High Level Conference on Food Security held in Rome in June 2008 and the High Level Meeting on Food Security held in Madrid in 2009- and in preparation for the oncoming World Summit on Food Security (WSFS), to be held next November in Rome, the proposal to eradicate hunger by 2025 and ensuring food Security for an increased population by 2050 is being contemplated. Even though, nowadays, there is sufficient amount of food to feed humanity, the objective of eradicating hunger is diluted in time through a 15 and 40 years time period with no ratification of consequences.

From this campaign stand point, the first step should be to clearly identify the reasons why the previous compromises were not fulfilled. Organizing summits and multinational meetings does not guarantee *per se* the efficient achievement of established compromises and goals. These events lack efficiency and have a tremendous cost: on one side, the event organization cost, but most importantly and on the other side, the great cost of the loss of hope of hundreds of millions of people suffering from hunger who, despite of the grandiose declarations and great commitments, have not seen over the years effective results to change their dramatic personal situation.

The commitments established in these meetings and international summits are non-binding. There are no multilateral tools to verify the observance of these compromises by the parties involved and the subscribing member States. In our opinion, this poor international governance drags on the commitments over time. After failing to reduce hunger since 1996, it would be of no use to establish new and more ambitious objectives unless there is a radical and profound change in governance and enforcing mechanisms that would guarantee commitments compliance. This would be the main challenges for the WSFS.

World Food Security Governance

Summary of the main points of the document:

7. The current governance lacks coherence and efficiency. The system is poorly organized. There is a need for a strong leadership. The role of the High-Level Task Force (HLTF).
8. The need to draw and build upon existing structures. Involvement of all relevant actors along the food chain.
9. The Committee on Food Security could not fulfill the mission entrusted to it adequately for three reasons:
 - It has neither the political power nor all the scientific elements needed to tackle the problem;
 - It has no effective mechanism to follow up on food security issues at the national, regional and international levels;
 - It lacks financial resources.
10. Renewal and strengthening of the CFS as a system of governance of world food security: it must serve as the global forum for debate and convergence of the causes and consequences of food insecurity and the ways to address them.
11. Representation of the governments in the CFS at the ministerial level.
12. Establishment of a High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) within the framework of the CFS.
13. Participation of all the actors in the CFS.
14. Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security.

15. Partnerships development at the national level and at the CFS.
16. National internal cooperation needed.
17. The CFS is in charge of establishing an Early Reaction System for food crises with a view to reviving local food production in case of a crisis.

Comments:

The approach on governance stated in the contribution document to the WSFS seems to focus mainly on the coordination improvement of the assorted parties involved. For that purpose, a reform of the Committee on Food Security is called upon to reinforce its capacity and leadership as a global forum for debate and consensus building.

From the point of view of the campaign “The Right to Food. Urgent” the most adequate approach on food security governance is a focus on human rights. All people, regardless of their nationality, race, religion, gender, political ideas, etc... have a right to adequate and sufficient food. The States, at least those who subscribe to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹, have the obligation to respect – take no action or make no decision that would hinder or limit people’s right to food-, protect –take adequate measures to avoid third parties hindering or limitation of anyone’s right to food within the territory, whether it is an individual, a group or a company – and guarantee – develop projects that would facilitate the compliance of the right to food to its citizens and, in acute cases of highly vulnerable people who have no mean to access food, food should be supplied to them.

The search for governance coherence in global food security should be built within the framework of human rights to food evaluating what measures are or are not coherent with the humans right to food, what policies are or are not coherent, what international agreements are or are not coherent. The human right to food should legally empower –and therefore, it should enforce the demand on certain commitments- the governance on food security at the global, regional, national and household level.

On this premise, we believe it is appropriate to foster a CFS reform if, and only if, it does not only work as forum for debate but also if it is granted boosted capacity, leadership strength, have an expanded representation, with the participation of different parties, including among others, the civil society. Over the last years, several supranational endeavors to fight hunger have taken, some of them with great support –such as the CMA 1996 Action Plan, the ODM or the Comprehensive Framework for Action– and other initiatives by smaller groups of countries –Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, or the joint Declaration on Food Security by the G8 in L’Aquila in July 2009–. It is important to clarify the status and scope of these initiatives as well as to articulate them and unite them within the framework of a reformed CFS to facilitate follow-up procedures and maximize its efficiency.

Experience has shown recent coordinated reaction by the international community to respond to different diseases: SARS, swine flu, or the campaign to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. But in regards to this “disease” –hunger- that affects a sixth of the world population and that causes millions of death every year, we have not achieved similar reaction intensity, coordination, or the same resources mobilization. The rich countries are not afraid of hunger; but they do the fear swine flu, AIDS or tuberculosis. They lack motivation to seriously work against hunger and to boost an assertive political will that would foster efficient and coherent compromises.

¹ Over 150 States have signed the ICESCR

Public Investment and Funding

Summary of the key points of the document:

18. Deficient level of resources availability for agriculture. ODA for agriculture: 1980=17%, 2006=3,8%. Similar trends in national budgets.
19. Objective: to achieve a 17% ODA for agriculture in five years.
20. Urge the government of developing countries to dedicate part of their national budget. 2003 Maputo Declaration.
21. International organizations (World Bank, IMF, OECD, IFAD, FAO) should monitor the progress in achieving the goals of financing.

Comments:

The document highlights the poor financing that agriculture and rural development have received since the 80's, but it fails to explain why the financing was so drastically reduced and who benefited from this trend. It is clear that it did come to the detriment of families and small farmers, who are 70% of those billion suffering from hunger. It is somewhat paradoxical that some of those in charge of monitoring the progress and improving the adequate financial level for agriculture are organizations who were responsible for its dismantling.

The statements on sections 19 and 20 show that this is a document written by the North, the developed countries ("we make the commitment" to increase the ODA; "urge the government of the developing countries"). In these types of processes, it would be desirable and convenient to have a sound and balanced participation of all member States of the United Nation from the beginning of the process, the drafting of the initial documents and the early efforts to define it. Even though it is true that investment prevented to a certain extent the 70's famine, as it is stated in the contribution document to the WSFS, the long term consequences of the indiscriminate use and monopolization of the agricultural supplies are partially responsible for the current food and environmental crisis. The private investments should be targeted towards sustainable agricultural systems that would respect the environment, protect the people and its culture and bring financial benefits to the disadvantaged farmers, without mortgaging the future generations.

At the same time, a different approach on global food supply should be looked upon (half of the world's population depends on rice for food), mostly in the north, geared towards a healthier model, using food ingredients that would require basic preparation and hopefully avoid doubling the food production by 2050.

Private investment

Summary of the key points of the document:

22. Importance of private investment.
23. Promotion of foreign direct investment. The need to reconcile the interests of the investing countries and the recipient.
24. For recipient: technological transfer, employment creation, higher income. For investors: sustainability of the endeavor and adequate productivity.
25. Impact studies of the FDI. Code of conduct for FDI in agricultural land and water.

Comments:

Stimulating the private investment is fundamental while observing that in those countries with a high index of the population suffering undernutrition the public sector cannot by any means, dodge the problem and its responsibility in guaranteeing food security and the right to food. Moreover, small producers' investment should be also accounted for as private investment, allowing for improved credit access, infrastructure, know-how, technology, etc.

The countries of the North should supervise and guarantee that both, their policies, investments, agreements, covenants, etc., as well as those of the private entities with headquarters in their territory, targeting countries or regions where the undernourishment situation affects a high proportion of the population do not only worsen the problem but have a proactive approach to the achievement of the human right to food and the reduction of the number of undernourished people.

It is not as easy to reconcile the interests of the investors and the recipients of foreign development investments, as stated in the document. It has been evident that foreign investment in poor countries are lead by big corporations that do not focus on food production but instead, they even compete against it; for example, the big land areas for the production of biofuels or wood. This scenario hinders the farmers' population access to production resources and reduces the local production of food and therefore causes a price increase of staple food. This scenario has a more negative incidence on the most vulnerable population. The purchase of big land areas in the developing countries by companies or governments of rich nations that, in some cases expel farmer communities or force their relocation, already has a negative impact on food security for the poor people who often find themselves powerless in the presence of these great economic powers.

Based upon the agreement published by the civil society RANSA 2009 in Madrid, we highlight the importance of avoiding private companies power status in the CFS reform, specifically multinational corporation related to food production.

The private investment of developed countries on poor countries should always be addressed from a stand-point that would first benefit the most impoverished group by guaranteeing their right to food in the long run, and would secondly benefit the remaining parties involved. In order to avoid future mortgaging and technological dependence, investments in simple, sustainable technology that could be easily replicated at the local level and would minimize the farmer future investment needs should be prioritized.

Trade and support to farmers

Summary of the key points of the document:

- 26. The rules-based international agricultural trade system that is open, non-distorted, non-discriminatory, equitable and fair can promote agricultural development. Successful conclusion of the Doha Round of trade negotiation.
- 27. Many developing nations, in particular the least developed countries, have remained at the margin of agricultural trade. Adequate incentives should be provided while observing the risks of adverse impact if not properly designed to avoid distorting effects to the detriment of small and poor farmers.

28. Farmers should have an income comparable with those earned by workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors.
29. Developed countries should continue to shift their support to “decoupled” forms of support under the WTO provisions. Developing nations should accept appropriate support measures. The CFS and the WTO should propose support measures and policies for an international agricultural system based on open and fair trade while ensuring food security for all.
30. Food and agricultural trade policies should foster world food security.
31. Developed nations Technical Barriers to trade to block imports.
32. Aid for Trade

Comments:

So far, the international trade rules have not balanced the trade scale, but instead they have benefited the powerful economies to the detriment of the weaker ones. The trade agreements, the international trade policies, the subsidies systems... have to respect and be coherent with the human right to food. So for example, the United States and the European Community developed protectionist measures in agriculture regardless of the impact they have on agriculture in other disadvantaged countries.

The complex negotiation scenario in the WTO demand extremely developed skills and highly-qualified human resources. In this situation, the poor countries are at a serious disadvantage whereby, with their limited resources and skills, and in several cases their foreign debt, are forced to negotiate with great world powers who are above all, mostly interested in their economic growth, their corporations expansion, even at the expense of generating poverty and food insecurity issues in the poorest countries. Agricultural trade regulation within the WTO– an institution that operates outside of the United Nations, that does not observed the public interest criteria, that is governed by the commercial law– is perhaps not the most adequate mean to improve and guarantee food security and the right to food. Who would safeguard those the public interests, the respect, protection and guarantee of the human right to food within the WTO? It is convenient to study means of differential treatment for agricultural trade and food regulated within the United Nations scope.

The food chain is set up in such a way that, no matter how high the price of the agricultural products are, the primary producers do not receive an adequate income for their work but instead, the intermediate chain links absorb most of the profit.

Market Stability

Summary of the key points of the document:

33. Food and agricultural markets instability could have severe consequences on world food security.
34. Address the issue of speculation in the agricultural markets given that it played a certain role in the increasing level and volatility of world food prices in 2007-08
35. Analyze the causal links between speculation and the agricultural commodities price movement. There is a need to develop appropriate guiding principles for commodities future markets.

36. Grain storage should be encouraged at village and national level. Establishment of regional grain reserve system.
37. Establish a social security net programs to the needy and vulnerable.
38. The emergence of biofuels. Crops for biofuels production sometimes compete with food crops for land and water resources.
39. The production of bio-fuels should be environmentally sustainable and should respect food security.

Comments:

The 2007-2008 food crisis taught us that food is not like any other commodity; first of all, food is the mean to safeguard the human right to food, to meet basic needs for human beings livelihood. Due to its key role, the involved trade and investments should be specially regulated to secure preferential importance to food security over economic profit. In any case, the subsequent price drop has not decreased the number of undernourished people, but instead and on the other hand, it highlights the issues of inadequate access to food.

The campaign had pointed out before that at the event of establishing grain reserve, there are numerous historical and cultural experiences that we could learn from such as, for example, the Spanish granaries in the 18th century and that played an important role in food security.

The production of biofuels and their quota regime within energy production should be cautiously analyzed to evaluate in which cases the production is beneficial from the standpoint of energetic efficiency (some studies have shown that, in certain cases, biofuels production has a higher energy demand than the energy it supplies), from an environmental point of view (that they in fact positively contribute to the reduction of emissions and that they do not spoil the land) and from a social standpoint (that they do not hinder the right to food and food security of the most vulnerable populations).

The production and use of biofuels should be sustainable; once its viability and sustainability is analyzed, comprehensive certification systems should be promoted to safeguard the right to food along the supply chain, starting with the producer up to the consumer.

Institutional and capacity building

Summary of the key points of the document:

40. Special focus on small farmers and their access to resources to resources.
41. Strengthen capacity building to achieve increased agricultural production and productivity with emphasis on preservation of the natural resource base, expansion of employment and decent work opportunities.
42. Support system for small farmers over the 60's, 70's and 80's. Creation of support services to small farmers.
43. Small farmers need the public sector management support to collect information and inputs access as well as product marketing.
44. Rebuilding the institutional capacity of the developed countries.

Comments:

The fight against hunger demands prioritizing the needs of small farmers, fisherman, women and other vulnerable groups and their access to the needed resources to produce food. Therefore, the top priority in achieving food security for those 1 billion hungry people should be food sovereignty. Any strategy would not be enough to fight hunger, any agricultural model would not be valid; a model of rural development primarily focused on the domestic production is needed and that support is a public responsibility.

In order to rebuild the institutional capacity of many developing nations, these countries should have the necessary financial resources. Some of these countries are spending up to 50% of their GDP in the payment of their foreign debt boosted in several cases, by developed nations and multilateral institutions. The debt should be cancelled at best, or at least, these resources should support the most basic and disadvantaged groups.

Food Quality and Security

Summary of the key points of the document:

- 45. Food quality and Security are essential for public health. The application of quality assurance and risk-based food security is essential.
- 46. Strengthening of the Codex Alimentarius. Non-utilization of food security as discriminatory measures against imports.

Comments:

The FAO/WHO joint program on Food Principles (Codes Alimentarius) has been criticized in the past by different groups, specially the civil society, considering that it is biased in the interest of corporations at the national level (influence over the representation of some States in the Codex Alimentarius) as well as the international level (by corporate pressures on the delegates deliberating on the Codex)

In addition, what happens in fact is that some developing nations use the Codex principles on security and quality as protectionist barriers, just like the contribution document points out. On this matter, it is essential that quality and security assurance is based on risk analyzes in accordance to objective and independent scientific tests. .

The weakness of the document is evident in certain countries food control systems that may allow at times, worrisome cases of lobbying and interference that may lead to negative consequences in public health.

Transboundaries animal and plants pests and diseases

Summary of the key points of the document:

- 47. It represents a threat to food Security. Pest could cause the loss of 40% of the food supply in the world.
- 48. Strengthening of the veterinary and plant health services at the national level.

49. Build capacity.

Comments:

The high-yield production techniques, such as the use of transgenic elements, animal fattening systems, etc. and the way it relates to the transmission of diseases and hosts' changes should be investigated.

The issue of whether infections in agriculture and livestock are generated on-site or are generated through the raw material import that is not adapted to the local conditions should be well analyzed.

Nowadays, intensive farming use pest, pathogens and weed control programs, especially in big single-crops, but these systems have not proven to be effective. It is necessary to change the production model by using more sustainable farming techniques. From now on, controlling that the species are well adapted to the receptor ecosystem by training the farmer to improve yield using local sound species at moderate annual costs is necessary.

Support by the developed countries should come in the shape of research based on the local resources and their capacity to improve production and treatment of pests and diseases.

Climate change

Summary of the key points of the document:

- 50. Significant consequences in food security.
- 51. Adaption throughout the food chain to climate change. Investments to improve efficiency in risk management. Economic growth to strengthen the poor.
- 52. Joint effort in farming to mitigate the negative impact of climate change.
- 53. Importance of agriculture and food security in the 2009 Copenhagen Summit.

Comments:

Keeping in mind that global warming is already causing climate change that affects farming, forestry and fishing and will seriously endanger food security, determining who is mostly responsible for this climate change is essential. An escalating liability system, whereby, those economies that are most responsible for climate change should contribute more to the mitigation of hunger and the vulnerability of certain populations should be established.

In this section we note an omitted discussion on today's development model that is based upon increased levels of consumption in general, and in particular increased energy consumption that are neither sustainable nor universally-accepted, and are therefore unfair and ethically dubious.

The farming conservation model should not be accepted as the best adapted to climate change. Farming should be drawn upon a sustainable model, understood as "a social and economic management model based upon an equitable and representative development that respects both the environment and the natural resources as fundamental to the economic activity. Agriculture is

sustainable when it is ecologically safe, economically viable, socially fair and culturally appropriate, based upon a holistic scientific method” (UN Conference on Environment and Development, Brazil 1992). Applying this model with rigorous on-site climate change impact studies (avoiding estimations or spin-offs) in farming in the developing countries will greatly help transform agricultural systems to cope with climate change.

In this context, paradigm changes on energy resources demand are needed in favor of an assorted availability of resources where recyclable energy will be increasingly prominent, among which biofuels – as long as they abide by the environmental, social and energy principles- are included.

Under no circumstances, the use of biofuels should hinder the right to food, in both the supply and demand countries; there is a need for international consensus on this issue.

The countries that currently demand biofuels cannot evade the consequences that their demands has to the detriment of productive resources – land and water specifically- in developing countries. Current biofuel production management will not contribute to energy autonomy in the raw material suppliers’ countries while it will have a negative impact on food security of the most vulnerable populations.

Therefore, any negotiation or agreement on biofuels production and trade should be regulated by establishing ethical standards or certification whereby environmental, social, ecological respect is guaranteed in the production process as well as food security.