

## COMMENTS ON THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FOR A EUROPEAN POLICY FRAMEWORK ON FOOD SECURITY IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

It seems that the underlying purpose of this policy framework is – within the crisis context that has caused a high increase in the number of people suffering from hunger – to improve the European ODA support to fight hunger, by effectively contributing to the fulfillment of the Goal 2 of the MDG as well as the 1996 World Food Summit Objective. Therefore, it would be convenient that the title conveys the importance of the purpose of fighting hunger, as opposed to supporting any type of agricultural model or simply trying to improve the national food security statistics. The goal is to effectively reduce hunger by decreasing the number of people who are subjugated by it. In consequence, it is important to address “the challenges of agriculture, food security and nutrition in the fight against hunger”

### Questions 1, 3, 5 and 31

**Scope of the document.** In this document, as well as in other EU documents, the importance of the EU as a major donor is highlighted. The type and importance of the role of the EU only makes sense within a coordinated and coherent framework of action of the EU within the development policy of the European Commission and the member States. A policy framework focused on the Commission cooperation to Developing Countries in agriculture, food security and nutrition will be important to guarantee a proper delivery of the support funds managed by the Commission, but these would only represent a fraction of the EU as a whole. In order to achieve global impact, it would be convenient that the policy framework would be agreed upon, shared and applied by both, the Commission and the EU member states.

**Policies Coherence.** May be, one of the most important features that should be included in this policy and where most efforts should be targeted on, is EU policies coherence to fight hunger. The EU should embrace a policy that would review the impact that many of its decisions have on assorted fields (trade, Common Agricultural Policy, energy policies, etc.) that affects the hunger situation in the world. Policy coherence as previously stated should become a fundamental axis of this policy framework document.

**Focus on Rights.** Based upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ESCRC and other international law instruments on human rights, the current world food insecurity circumstances could be considered threats to the human right to food. The European Union, as a social and political entity that defends democracy and the respect to human rights, should review its policies from this standpoint and should rectify any practices that impose a threat to humans’ right to food. This is, without a doubt, one of the great added values that a focus on

human rights associated with political coherence could contribute to the framework of this specific policy. The EU should demonstrate with this policy that human rights and the lives of those who die of famine are more important than any commercial, geostrategic, political or economic interest.

The human right to food has been thoroughly studied, defined and outlined by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (through the General Comment nº 12), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (through numerous reports issued since its creation in 2000), by the FAO Council approval of the voluntary guidelines to effectively achieve the human to food within the framework of national food security, by the work of FAO Right to Food Unit over the past three years, as well as by the evaluation and analysis of several organizations and civil entity networks. There are already samples of constitutional and legal merging of this right, as well as the integration of the rights focus in the national strategic guidelines on food security and nutrition, or even legal resolutions about it. The creation of this policy should take advantage of this past experience on a rights- focus-ground base.

#### **Question 4**

**European Policy on biofuels.** The European Union should consider adopting a system of certification that would guarantee that any biofuel entering the EU is produced and manipulated in a sustainable manner –with economic, ecologic and energy sustainability criteria-starting with the farmer up to the final consumer in Europe.

#### **Questions 6 and 7**

**The mean and goal.** The consultation document clearly states the objective of coping with the challenges of agricultural sustainability and food security in the long run by:

- Increasing the availability of food
- Improving the access to food
- Improving the quality food and optimization of the food resources
- Improving prevention measures and management of crisis situations

But it is important to point out that the approach should not be neutral, and that the policies document should refine its statements. For a more efficient fight against hunger, an increase in the availability of food only would not be valid. The text has an underlying message- even though it does not openly state it- of support to market-oriented, modern, intensive and competitive agriculture. It seems to follow the same premises that have been embraced in the past. It ignores the fact that production-although important- is not the main problem but instead, distribution and access to food is crucial. When fighting hunger, may be the most

adequate approach is not to prioritize the market-oriented agriculture but instead, the family farming with a key focus on food production for these rural families.

The fight against hunger demands the most attention to the small farmers, fishermen, women and other vulnerable groups and their access to the necessary resources to produce food. Therefore, the priority focus to achieve food security for that billion of people suffering from hunger is food sovereignty. A random strategy to fight hunger will simply not work. A random agricultural model will simply not work. Instead, a rural development model primarily oriented to the family production is needed, which means:

- The small farmers should have sufficient and good-quality land at their disposal to at least cope with their own food demands.
- The farmers should even be able to cope with the demands of certain groups in their communities.
- Their products, in case they are sold out in local and regional markets, should not compete with products of subsidized nature.
- The families should have access to good quality and sufficient raw materials to improve and increase their production. Etc.

This model, although less glamorous, less modern and not as attractive to the EU, could be significantly more efficient to fight hunger within the framework of environmental sustainability. This model should be the key target of this policy.

**Food and Nutrition at the Forefront.** In the 60's and 70's, agricultural programs oriented to the farmers improved the hunger situation in the world. But in the 80's, the implementation of the World Bank and IMF neoliberal policies, in fact eradicated this type of farmers-supportive rural agriculture. The Developing Countries Agricultural Ministries lost power, budget support, staff members and the direct contact with the rural communities, and the consequences are now becoming evident. After 1996, when the World Food Summit stated the compromise to reduce by half the number of people suffering from hunger, that figure has been increasing year by year until exceeding the 1 billion people amount in 2009. Learning from our past mistakes is crucial. Prioritizing (and not exclusively but yet, most importantly) the support to the farmers so that they can develop their sustainable production capacity of quality and diverse food for an adequate nutrition, is imperative.

There is an unlimited amount of non-production policies that the EU should sponsor in order to diminish the differences in agriculture in the developed countries compared to the developing countries such as:

- Promoting internal transportation infrastructure and more so in regional integration scenarios.

- The option granted to developed nations to apply the same agriculture protectionist measures as the EU.
- Setting up minimum prices to the farmers based upon agricultural production cost.
- Promoting policies that would benefit the production of a diversified range of food geared towards the internal market with the purpose of alleviating the hunger situation. Etc.

### **Questions 10 and 13**

**Economic Access to food.** It should be noted in this document that 70% of the people who live in poverty are located in rural areas, and that approximately 75% of the people suffering from hunger are farmers. Probably, the best way to guarantee economic access to food is to provide the necessary resources to produce it: land, seeds, water, technology, agricultural services, loans, etc. This would therefore call for the strengthening of the corresponding Ministry of Agriculture so that the farmer communities have proper counseling and so that it has capacity to adequately regulate the access to land and other production resources.

It should also be mentioned that certain aspects of the current international agricultural trade system which could seemingly enforce economic access to food –by facilitating the availability of cheaper imported food from subsidized agriculture- indeed destroy local agriculture, specially the smaller-scale farming, damage the local economic structure and reduces the economic access to food, even though it is available at a cheaper price.

In regards to the improvement of the market governance at the macroeconomic level, if the EU maintains its preferential treatment to its own production over the production of developing countries, the market will be distorted and no possibility of establishing a fair governance criteria or even any type of incentive to the developing countries market is feasible. At the microeconomic level, a more efficient and fair agricultural administration to the farmers supplying the local markets in the developing countries, by stopping the speculation and corruption would benefit the small producers.

**Social aspect of access.** In order to achieve full access, beyond the physical and the economic dimensions, it will be important to also work on the social dimension by supporting programs of nutritional supervision that would help spot out the groups who suffer the worst under-nourishment indexes, as well as nutrition programs that would incorporate gender equality issues.

**Socio-political aspect.** The participation of farmer communities, organizations and network of rural women farmers in the monitoring and supervision of the public policies is crucial to guarantee access.

**Questions 14 and 18**

**Multiple-sector Approach.** Basic nutrition is one of the components of primary health care. It would be important that a link is established in this policy document between this aspect and the announcements to be made on global health. The access to basic health care should be universal, and within this framework nutrition should be adequately addressed. The public health care system should incorporate nutrition protocols: nutritional surveillance, follow-up in cases of undernourishment – both acute and chronic– nutrition education -specially oriented to safeguard good nourishment to pregnant women and babies- school nutrition programs, supplement nutrition programs, etc.

There are several factors that affect people’s health that are related to nutrition which should therefore, be taken into consideration for this policy: access to water and sewage, nutrition education, hygiene, household and environment health (specially the kitchen), balanced diet, etc. It is important to act on the multiple fronts, avoiding the isolation of complementary projects that should be well coordinated.

There is past experience on setting up a Food Security and Nutrition State Department reporting to the Government Presidency with coordination responsibilities among several ministries.

**Questions 19 and 22**

**Take advantage of the past experience.** Spain has had over the course of its history experience with “pósitos”, which are municipal grain storage facilities that were used up the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It would be interesting that the Spanish Cooperation teams studied this past institution, which under the municipal supervision, played a key role in food security to the communities by identifying the lessons learned in the establishment of grain reservoirs to prevent food crisis situations.

**Food Trade.** The 2007-2008 food crises has taught us that food does not behave like any other commodity; first of all, it is the mean to guarantee the human right to food, to provide a basic need to human livelihood. Due to its key role, its trade and financial investments should be specially regulated so that food security is prioritized over financial revenues. The 2007-2008 crisis has demonstrated that the market is not an adequate institution to fully and automatically regulate food trade.

The WTO extremely complex negotiation scenario demands highly developed capacities and very qualified human resources. In this situation, the poor countries which are at a non-equal status due to their limited resources and capacities, in several cases with a lagging foreign debt, have to negotiate with world powers which are above all interested in their economic growth, their corporate expansion even at the expense of causing severe poverty or food insecurity in poor nations. The WTO agricultural trade regulation –an institution which is

outside of the UN scope, which does not operate with public interest criteria but instead, it is ruled by trade laws – is probably not the most adequate mean to safeguard food security and the right to food. Who would, within the WTO, defend the respect, the protection and the safeguarding of the right to food? It would be convenient to study a preferential treatment approach to agricultural and food trade regulated within the UN scope.

A major problem of the agricultural markets is that price volatility depends on the industrial capacity friendliness of a few products as opposed to the nourishing products production. This commercial interest in certain crops is prioritized over the farming that could meet the nourishment needs of the population in the developing countries and improve the nutritional intake of those suffering from hunger. Therefore the agriculture-food formula is broken by creating an agriculture-industry formula and leaving the people in the background.

### **Questions 27 and 28**

**Risk management focus.** We believe that this policy should integrate Humanitarian Aid within a broad context of sustainable development by a risk management approach behaving as a social process with the ultimate objective of reducing, predicting, and controlling the risks, its root causes and the impact on the society, once they turn into sociopolitical tension and instability, armed conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics and/or famine.

In addition to the humanitarian response to assist the population stricken by an emergency situation, it is necessary to address the causes of the disaster and previous vulnerability conditions, to avoid and reduce the consequences, once these risks have become disasters—both, armed conflict or natural disaster. Risk management involves prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, rehabilitation and reconstruction. These measures do not come in a consecutive linear timing. In general, and depending on the context, they are simultaneously combined to efficiently respond to the complexity of the crisis.