

POLICY ON

SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY
FARMERS' NEEDS AND CONTRIBUTIONS



Farmers are the key to achieve Sustainable Food Security. What farmers produce is the precondition to attain the UN Sustainable Development Goal number 2.

FAO stated in 2009 the multiple challenges facing agriculture in the 21st century:

- **Higher production of food, feed and fiber is needed for a growing population. The rural labour force is smaller, and more feed stocks for a potentially huge bio-energy market is needed**
- **Agriculture must contribute to the overall development in agriculture-dependent developing countries**
- **Agriculture must adopt more efficient and sustainable production methods and adapt to climate change**

Farmers feel and take responsibility of these challenges. However, eradication of hunger and poverty alleviation for the world's 10 billion people by 2050 is the responsibility of the whole global society.

It is clear, though, that farmers are in the forefront of the challenges. To be able to solve the challenges, farmers need appropriate political and legal frameworks.

The voices of farmers must therefore be heard and listened to. Decision-makers must consider the diversity of global agriculture and take into account their practical needs.

1

GLOBAL CHALLENGE TO FEED THE WORLD

Around 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide (UN-SDG, 2016). At the same time, overweight and obesity are increasing all over the world, including in developing countries. The world population is growing and according to the UN will reach 10 billion people by 2050 (UN, 2015). Despite a diminishing number of people suffering from hunger, different challenges – as price volatility, climate changes, population growth, political conflicts and scarce natural resources – are affecting the livelihood of the poor. Major efforts are thus needed to improve food security

Goal no. 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2) sets the target to end hunger, enhance food security, improve nutrition and enhance sustainable agriculture all over the world by 2030. To meet these targets, concrete actions are needed in each country.

People living in rural areas are the ones most affected by poverty (FAO); at the same time these people are essential in the problem-solving process, most of them being engaged in agriculture (IFAD.org) and active in food production, which is needed to tackle the food security challenge. Farmers are thereby also central in fulfilling the SDG goal no 1: No poverty. It is therefore essential that farmers' role in the poverty and food security discussion is strengthened, and that farmers and their representatives are involved in the policy design processes, as well as their implementation.

2

FARMERS CAN PROVIDE SOLUTIONS

Farmers produce food, feed and fiber. They lend and manage the land for coming generations. They are the ones maintaining their land fertile and their soils in a good health. Farmers have the knowledge and are eager to produce food even more efficiently with the sustainability of natural resources in focus. Resource efficiency will be improved further by technology and innovation.

Climate change is a big challenge for world food production. Farmers are strongly affected, but also hold the key to the solutions to tackle the climate challenge. Farmers have no choice but do what they can to mitigate and adapt in order to maintain the production potential and productivity of land. To this end, technology and innovation is of utmost importance. It helps farmers to further develop and control adequate seeds and breeds.

Therefore, the public has to provide adequate policies and support, enabling and allowing farmers to produce food in a sustainable and efficient way.

To this end, farmers are today and will continue contributing to food availability with all kinds of farming systems, small and large, conventional and organic, in the north and the south, in using the existing natural resources in a sustainable way, adapted to all kinds of local settings and natural conditions.

Without farmers there is no food security, no stability of food supply and no access to food. And this must be recognized in definitions, goal formulation and actions to be taken.

ACTUAL CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR AGRICULTURE

Farmers around the world are facing many common challenges. Above all, it is important to obtain fair returns from farming business. Livelihood in rural areas is often poor compared to urban agglomerations. When rural areas are left behind and profitability in agriculture is missing, young people look for opportunities outside farming. It is a global challenge to facilitate the entrance of young people in the agricultural sector. The current development leads to a future that lacks motivated professionals, who have the competence to produce safe and healthy food. Furthermore, price volatility and political instability lead to low investment into innovation and productivity increase.

The most important challenges for the agricultural sector:

Weak added-value for farmers, low producer prices

Increased costs of living while incomes of farmers are decreasing

Lack of access to land caused by high prices and increasing demand for farmland by non-farmers

Weak involvement of farmers, particularly rural women and youth into decisions making at all levels

Volatile prices and market fluctuation along the vulnerable food-chains

Vulnerability to climatic changes

Lack of access to knowledge, advisory services and technology

Highly ageing farming because of better opportunities of young people in other professions

Dependence on investors, traders and processors

Uncertain property rights and therefore no access to financial services, e.g. credits and production inputs

Weak empowerment of women, who play an important role of food production

Bad politics and governance

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WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

4.1

Stability in trade and adequate prices

Assuring market access to farmers offers them a sale opportunity for their products. Access to local, national and international markets is highly important to stimulate higher food security. This generates a production-based income and creates an incentive to improve production (productivity and specialization). Fair prices for agricultural products are, however, a precondition for assuring this incentive. This is a way to foster entrepreneurship.

Main preconditions

Fair and transparent prices and margins for agricultural produce and services

Fair sharing of value added and risks between the partners in the food chains

Fair compensation of publicly expected eco services

Fair collaboration across the entire supply chain

Enabling environment for farmer-owned cooperatives

Stable and accountable access to local, national and international markets

Support to improve stocking and conservation of products (seals and agro processing)

Moderate safeguarding measures to secure stability and a sustainable cultivation of natural potentials

Access to transparent price and market information, in order to react to global market changes

4.2

A more efficient and professional agriculture

To increase productivity, an enabling environment has to be guaranteed. Investments in agricultural projects require political stability. Farmers' organizations and cooperatives, combined with a strong involvement of women and youth in the decision-making processes can represent a powerful way to enhance food production and foster its professionalization. Such organizations can bring benefits to the farmers on both farm and political levels, the former by using synergies, sharing technologies and know-how and the latter by representing the farmers' interests on a political level.

Main preconditions

Invest in training, extension services, foster entrepreneurship and applied research

Strong institutions, assuring legal security and safe property rights

Support rural areas to develop infrastructure, irrigation and seeds

Optimize production costs by deregulation

Improve access to financial services

Foster local cooperation, agricultural cooperatives and representative advocacy organizations

Empower women and motivate the youth to engage in agriculture

Enhance responsible and coherent international cooperation

Promote crop and livestock varieties, which are best adapted to the local circumstances

4.3

Sustainable growth in agricultural production

Farmers are dependent on natural resources and therefore have a strong sense of using them in a sustainable way. Without soil, water and energy there is no possibility to farm or secure food for a growing population. Climate change is a factor that in most parts of the world has shown its consequences for farming, which has increased farmers' awareness to be resource efficient even further. Without healthy resources, there is no long-term production and no food security. Thus, sustainable food security affords that the natural potential in all regions are used to produce healthy food. It is short sighted to ignore ecological and economical externalities.

Farmers are ready to contribute to the sustainable growth needed in food production. However, the regulatory environment can be challenging. Legislation of course needs to be in the service of sustainability, however if rules and costs are not global, farmers alone cannot carry the extra costs. There is a need of global thinking.

Main requirements

Support resource efficient food production by sustainable use of natural resources in all countries

Promote investment in sustainable agriculture and sustainable production systems

Enable farmers to be competitive and to care for the environment at the same time

Foster public spending on Research & Development in agriculture to promote innovation

Establish financial conditions leading to effective development and resilience

Training and extension services, in particular for rural women farmers

Promote climate change adapted crops by maintaining a high diversity

Promote efficient use of energy and low emissions of greenhouse gases per produced unit

Coherence between public expectations on sustainability and prices for agricultural products

Improved awareness by the public

Farming is the mankind's future: no farming, no future. Food security is dependent on farmers. Despite this, the burden must not be laid merely on the farming community. An effort must be placed on employing creative measures to encourage every single household who occupy at least one square of land to farm. This will improve not only food security for each individual but also awareness and a healthy eating lifestyle. For this goal to be achieved, the society has to invest in public education by letting people know what the benefits and difficulties are and showing the importance of them playing a part. Youth and women must be motivated to get involved in farming and see it as a career. Therefore, the public must provide scholarships to pursue degrees in agriculture.

CONCLUSION – FARMERS HOLD THE SOLUTION TO FOOD SECURITY

To conclude, sustainable food security must and can be fostered. The most important and affected actors of food insecurity are male and female farmers, particularly small scale farmers who are the majority in rural areas in many countries. Therefore, farmers must be involved in decision making on food security measures, on local, regional, national and global levels. Special attention must be given to the needs and involvement of youth, our farmers of the future. Farmers are the key for food security and they know best, how to improve sustainable food production. WFO will work towards this, in strong collaboration with international organizations and national governments

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