



**SUSTAINABLE FOOD  
SECURITY  
FOR ALL BY 2020**  
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SUMMARY NOTE

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**Title:** The Roles and Responsibilities of Industrialized Countries in Assuring Sustainable Food Security: Setting Priorities for Action

***Introduction***

If we want to arrive at a conclusion by the end of our Conference as to which priorities we need to choose and whose responsibility it is to end hunger in the world, we should use unequivocal language. So I decided to be provocative in the wording of three fundamental hypotheses and four areas for action which I am presenting in this pointed form to serve as input for the panel discussion that is to follow.

***Responsibilities and mistakes of the past: Presentation of fundamental hypotheses***

*Hypothesis 1: It is not the exclusive responsibility of the industrialized countries to end world hunger. Unless developing countries combat corruption and achieve good governance, progress on democratization, and peace, there will be no solution to the problem of world hunger.*

In a poll among German project workers in food security projects, a majority indicated in their replies that the **corruption and cronyism** existing in the developing countries had been contributing to a significant deterioration of the food situation. 1998 Nobel prize laureate Amartya Kumar Sen made a point of noting the links between hunger and political systems, between **hunger and fundamental democratic values**. Examples such as Zimbabwe show how, as a result of ill-conceived policies, a country which has the potential not only to feed its own people but even help feed other countries ends up in need and has to rely on considerable levels of cereal imports. FAO considers 23 countries to be most severely affected by hunger. Most of them are characterized by permanent instability and violent conflict, as well as poor governance, usually coupled with unpredictable weather conditions, harvest failure, poverty, and population pressure. The situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia shows how quickly a problematic food situation can become even worse once human and financial resources are wasted on war. The developing countries need to face up to their responsibility, aided by the international community.

*Hypothesis 2: The industrialized countries too are contributing to hunger in the developing countries. It is the political, moral and legal responsibility of the industrialized countries to end their ill-conceived policies of the past.*

The developing countries are currently losing some US\$40 billion a year in income as a result of the **industrialized countries' agricultural protectionism** [1995 figure; from World Bank report]. If you consider that the EU alone is spending an annual 40 billion euros on subsidies for less than 7 million farms, while at the same time spending a mere 7 billion euros on development cooperation [this is only the sum spent by the Commission, not including member states' development cooperation], you will realize the absurdity of it all: almost 5,800 euros from the EU budget go to every single farmer, as opposed to 1.4 euros to every person in the developing countries. Every citizen of the EU — there are currently 376.68 million — is paying well over 100 euros per year for subsidies to the agricultural sector, and just under 20 euros for global stability and the fight against poverty and hunger — to me, those are unacceptable proportions.

Local markets in developing countries have frequently been disrupted by subsidized exports from industrialized countries. By way of example, let me just mention beef in West Africa, poultry in Yemen, tomatoes in South Africa — and these are only a few items in a long list.

In the area of **emergency relief**, premature offers of aid by the Western nations have often prevented the achievement of internal solutions. The food needed is often available within the country or at least within the region and is just in the wrong place. Imported food from the EU (or other industrialized countries) will then hamper the marketing of local production, which tends to be low to begin with, and prevent the development of a sustainable, self-reliant food supply. Principles such as making it a priority to buy food in regional markets and giving greater attention to nutrition habits have resulted in improvements in this regard. 95% of German food aid is now purchased in developing countries.

The development of our agricultural sector, just like all sectors of the economy in general (and in the case of agriculture, it has even been an undesirable path of development), must not take place at the cost of the developing countries. The industrialized countries must accept this responsibility, and I will comment on this aspect when I talk about the areas for action.

*Hypothesis 3: Fighting hunger is not high on the public agenda. If we continue with business as usual, we will fail to meet the target of the World Food Summit (halving the number of hungry people by 2015). We need to do more, but we also need to do things differently!*

**Expenditure on food security measures** is on the decline, as is spending on agricultural development. So from my point of view, we need to set clear priorities.

In its State of Food Insecurity report 2000, FAO suggested that priority attention should be given to people who suffer from the greatest depth of hunger. According to FAO, a country with high prevalence of undernourishment and a daily dietary energy deficit of over 300 kilocalories per person should strive to reduce the depth of hunger as a top priority so as to prevent further expansion of the problem. Personally, I share that view.

What are the factors that determine people's food situation? It has come to be universally accepted that the causes of hunger go far beyond insufficient food production. Food security measures must, above all, improve hungry people's access to food, and they always need to include aspects of fostering education and health, so as to ensure that there will not just be sufficient food consumption but that the food consumed will also be sufficiently healthy. Also, we all know that good governance, relatively democratic structures, and a certain measure of freedom of the press are of great importance for the food situation of the people of a given country.

But the **international environment** also has an influence on food security: WTO rules and the agreements relating to biodiversity and intellectual property (CBD and TRIPS) have a clear impact on the options available to people in the developing countries to provide for themselves or to import food. New technological developments such as those in the area of genetic engineering are also relevant for the developing countries. While genetic engineering is not the answer to hunger in the developing countries, we must not ignore the potential that this technology offers to these countries. One of the essentials in this context, from my point of view, is that poor population groups be given access to these innovations and that countries have relevant legal provisions and capacities for safety analyses.

This all goes to show that the challenges of food security have implications for other important policy areas as well. On the basis of what I have said, on the basis of the three hypotheses I have put forward, I would now like to derive four areas for action to be tackled by promising food security measures:

### ***Presentation of the four areas for action***

*Area 1: The ill-conceived agricultural policy of the past must be ended. The turnaround in agriculture to which the German government has committed itself is a step in the right direction.*

One may criticize globalization and global organizations such as **WTO** for a variety of reasons, and some of the fears of the anti-globalization movement are understandable. However, there is also a great

deal to be said for global regulatory arrangements if their rules are based on social and ecological sustainability. We can, and we will, use the current WTO negotiations to reduce the deficits described under Hypothesis 2. This implies **four specific demands**:

1. EU **export subsidies** and other forms of export subsidization in other countries must be reduced and, ultimately, abandoned, so as to prevent distortions in developing countries' local markets.
2. Industrialized countries must **open their markets** to a greater extent for products from developing countries so as to enable them to earn much-needed foreign exchange. Some vital initial steps have been taken, such as the EU's EBA initiative (everything but arms), which grants LLDCs tariff-free access to the EU market. I call upon other industrialized countries to join this initiative. Further tariff improvements should be sought, for instance within the scope of the Generalized System of Preferences. If we want to gain the developing countries' support for a new world trade round, we must not leave it at empty promises. We need to help the developing countries make use of the opportunities arising to them through the opening up of markets in tariff terms. Non-tariff trade barriers such as those related to sanitary and phytosanitary rules and standards must not effectively bar imports, either. The developing countries must therefore be enabled to meet, monitor and, if necessary, certify these standards. To that end, they need our support.
3. The developing countries need to have the right to **protect and foster their own agricultural sectors**. This applies both to external protection measures and to forms of internal support.
4. The continuing liberalization of the world market means that the new WTO round needs to take stronger and more efficient account of the **special situation of low-income and food deficit countries (LIFDCs)** than in the Marrakesh Agreement [*compensation for LIFDCs when food prices rise*].

*Area 2: Other international agreements and processes must support the goals of the World Food Summit.*

The **protection of biodiversity** is indispensable for food security. Without the treasure of genetic resources that has been safeguarded for centuries, no progress will be possible in the area of breeding. So protection must by no means fall prey to commercial utilization — in concrete terms, this means that the provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (**TRIPS**) must not contradict the goals of the Biodiversity Convention. The developing countries must retain the right to frame national law, within the framework of the applicable legislation, in such a way that purchased seeds can be reused for sowing and for local research. The German government also emphasizes the sovereignty of all countries over their traditional knowledge and their local genetic resources. The benefits arising from the utilization of these resources should be shared in a balanced and equitable way.

Another important factor influencing global food security is **global warming and climate change**. News such as the report three weeks ago that the tropical storm "Usagi" destroyed some 20% of the rice harvest in a north-eastern province of Vietnam and caused the loss of the soybean harvest on a total area of some 19,000 hectares barely make the news at all anymore [*tiny news item in Süddeutsche Zeitung, August 13*]. All countries therefore need to continue and step up their efforts for climate protection, because it is especially the poorest countries and in those, the poorest population groups, that suffer as a result of the way we treat our natural resources. Other natural resources, especially **soil, water and aquatic resources**, are under threat as well. Here, too, national and international action is vital in order to safeguard the fundamental prerequisites for food production. This is why I believe that food security should be part of the agenda of the **Rio+10** process.

*Area 3: Legal reform in the area of land rights and improvements in credit systems are priority issues for rural development. The fight against AIDS in rural regions must be given greater attention than in the past.*

**Support to rural development** is a very complex task: it relates to all dimensions of sustainable development (economic, ecological, social, plus political), and it requires a multi-sector approach (agricultural and non-agricultural production, education, health) addressing multiple levels of intervention (from the local to the global). The range of **activities** is accordingly quite broad, extending from the introduction of appropriate market and price policies all the way to fostering education and health.

Our experience has shown that support to agrarian reform and improvements in the rural credit system are central factors for success. The German government therefore attaches special importance to agrarian and land reform and advocates relevant action in its policy dialogue with the governments of its partner countries. It provides financial and advisory support, for example, to tenancy reforms, socially compatible distribution of land, and securing a legal basis for access to land or land ownership, especially for women.

However, all these efforts are threatened by **AIDS**, which, in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, is largely rendering useless our joint efforts for development. The international community has therefore committed itself to combining forces to fight the disease. The rural poor must be included in that effort. In German development cooperation, we have made the fight against HIV/AIDS a cross-cutting issue which is being mainstreamed into all projects.

*Area 4: The point is not above all else to produce more food but to make food accessible to hungry people.*

It is widely known that sufficient food is produced worldwide to sustain humankind. The problem is that people need to be enabled to afford the food. This is why poverty reduction and income-generating measures are indispensable.

But even if sufficient food is available, there is still a risk that people might suffer from **undernutrition or malnutrition**. In order to fight the "hidden hunger" — iron, iodine, or vitamin A deficiency (micronutrient malnutrition) —, food and health counseling is an essential and promising activity. This is an area where **women** play a vital role, and the way food is prepared. An IFPRI study found that improving women's/mothers' education levels is central (43.0%) to children's nutrition.

In its State of Food Insecurity report 2000, FAO describes the 1982 **program of the government of Thailand**. There was a broad-based information campaign for poor rural people, and volunteers were trained and mobilized — one for every ten households. Actions were aimed at increasing production of fish, chicken, vegetables and fruits, correcting detrimental eating patterns, and improving health care. Within ten years, the more severe forms of malnutrition were thus eliminated.

Examples of this sort show that it is possible to overcome hunger and undernutrition if efforts also address the structural conditions prevailing in a country and if people are part of the changes. In this way, we can succeed in gradually ending the need for emergency relief.

### **Conclusion**

In its calculations for 2000, FAO arrives at the conclusion that if we keep our efforts at previous levels, we will only reduce hunger by less than one third by 2015 — thus failing by far to meet the goal we have all subscribed to, namely halving the number of people suffering from hunger. It is the shared responsibility of industrialized and developing countries to do their utmost to prevent such failure. We need to learn from our mistakes, we need to make use of the new global regulatory agreements for the benefit of our objectives, and we need to improve the concrete efforts under way at the national and local levels. To that end, a great deal of commitment and assertiveness is required on the part of all players - especially when it comes to putting one's own house in order!

*Note: The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.*