SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY – BUILDING RESILIENCE

Introduction

One in every seven people does not have enough food on a daily basis. At the same time, ‘hidden hunger’ – resulting from a deficiency in micronutrients – is the leading underlying cause of death for more than 2.5 million children under five each year. Hidden hunger also accounts for over 20% of maternal mortality. Undernutrition disproportionately affects poor countries, particularly in rural areas: 98% of those hungry live in developing countries and 80% of the world’s under-nourished children live in just 20 countries. Stunting in children leads to irreversible effects on mental and physical development, lessening their productivity as adults and thwarting their future contribution to economic growth.

In many countries, gross domestic product (GDP) lost to undernutrition is between 2-3%. As a result, at household level people must be able to fully provide for their food and nutritional needs in terms of quality and quantity. A key challenge is to ensure that agriculture, supported where necessary by social transfer programmes, contributes to sufficient income and nutritious food for households.

Food security – facts and figures

About 16% of the human population is hungry and lives in poverty – around 1 billion people. Most of the poor and hungry live in rural areas, where agriculture is the main economic activity, mostly through small-scale farming. About 85% of farmers in developing countries produce on less than 2 hectares of land.

Global population predictions vary, but most foresee some 9 billion people on the planet by 2050. To meet the food needs of the population in 2050, production must expand by an estimated 70% compared to what it was in 2000. How can this be sustainably achieved in the face of growing constraints, including increasing competition for land and water, rising prices of food and fuel, and climate change?

Universal food security is critical – it underpins political stability, social welfare and economic growth. To achieve food security, crop intensification must be furthered. But myriad challenges exist concerning water, energy and food. There is a burgeoning demand for food as population increases and diets change in emerging countries. As countries grow richer, there is an increasing demand for meat, which puts escalating pressure on all natural resources, including valuable farmland.

There is much untapped potential to scale up production in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Investments in agriculture will need to focus increasingly on stimulating production in more varied regions of the world, in particular in these countries. Evidence shows that investments in the smallholder sector often yield the best returns in terms of poverty reduction and growth. Special attention must be given to smallholders, especially women and young farmers. However, this potential is often fraught with controversy as large corporate farming enterprises are buying up tracts of land.

So, how can we best support Africa to harness its huge potential to increase agricultural production and ensure food security and sustainable growth?
The majority of African farmers are smallholders. Transforming this level of agriculture to become more commercial is fundamental to developing the sector and for growth. Farmers need assistance to move up the value chain by accessing extension services, affordable inputs, new farming techniques and better rural infrastructure. Equally important is ‘soft’ infrastructure, including enforceable regulations covering issues such as equitable land rights and land tenure. Critically, farmers also need to be connected to fair local, national, regional and international markets.

However, producing enough food does not necessarily result in reducing food insecurity. Today, hunger is best understood not only in terms of supply, but also in terms of peoples’ ability to gain access to sufficient quality and quantity of food. While the European Commission has had some success in increasing the production of food through its Food Security Programmes, it now recognises the need for a greater emphasis on the affordability and accessibility of food.

The Commission’s response to rising global food and fuel prices put it succinctly: a ‘crisis could be looming, caused not by a global lack of food, but by a deterioration in the access to food of sufficient quality and quantity for the world’s most vulnerable people’. It is this recognition that provides the policy framework for the increased emphasis on social transfers in the European Commission’s response to hunger. The 2011 Communication on Increasing the Impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change proposes that aid should target particular areas, including ‘social protection, health, education and jobs’; and a forthcoming the 2012 Communication on Social Protection will elaborate how this will be achieved. The Communication calls for ‘innovative and tailor-made solutions based on country-specific needs and priorities’.

To help meet these challenges, the European Union’s ‘Agenda for Change’, sets out a more strategic approach to reducing poverty, including a more targeted allocation of funding. Aiming to increase the impact of EU development cooperation, emphasis is placed on support for inclusive and sustainable growth in sectors that have a strong multiplier impact on developing countries’ economies, and which at the same time offer strong opportunities in protecting the most vulnerable populations.

When addressing climate change prevention and adaptation, the European Commission will focus its support on a key sector – agriculture. This includes:

- Giving priority to locally developed practices and focusing on smallholder agriculture and rural livelihoods;
- Safeguarding ecosystem services;
- Supporting producer groups (farmers’ organisations);
- Strengthening supply and marketing chains;
- Supporting government efforts to facilitate responsible private investment; and
- Continuing to work on strengthening nutritional standards, food security governance and reducing excessive food price volatility at the global level.

**A Critical Crossroads?**

European Development Days 2012 is taking place at a critical crossroads. Participants will discuss and debate the outcomes of several summits and initiatives in the lead up to European Development Days.

The G8 Summit, held in May under the US presidency, marked the end of the three-year L’Aquila Food Security Initiative commitment agreed by leaders in 2009. On the eve of the Summit, a special symposium brought together senior global leaders, including US President Barack Obama, to launch a new G8 initiative on food security and to promote the opportunities and benefits inherent in responsible private sector investment in African agriculture. *European Development Days will be an opportunity to take stock and debate on the way forward.*
At the G20 Summit in Mexico, held in June, world leaders acknowledged that increasing agricultural production and productivity on a sustainable basis while considering the diversity of agricultural conditions is ‘one of the most important challenges the world faces today’. They also recognised that the crisis in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa underscores that strengthening emergency and long-term responses to food insecurity ‘remains a pressing challenge’ and that chronic malnutrition is an enormous drain on countries’ human resources. *How can these commitments be translated into action and results?*

The Rio+20 meeting held in June gave world leaders a platform to debate a wide range of issues, including sustainable agricultural development, food security and poverty. *How did they do?*

The second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) will be held in Uruguay in October, immediately after European Development Days. The conference, which will focus on partnership for innovation and impact on smallholder livelihoods, is an important opportunity for partnership opportunities. *European Development Days is an opportunity to feed participants recommendations into this important forum.*

### European Development Days 2012

At the European Development Days 2012, six high-level panels will address the issues of sustainable agriculture, food security and resilience:
- A More Effective Partnership for a More Resilient World
- Resilience: the Nutrition Dimension
- Growing a Better Future for Farmers
- Community Resilience – Social Safety Nets
- Free Humanity from Hunger
- Small Farmers – Big Business?

European Development Days will also feature several special addresses and project lab presentations where participants can share best practices.

### Issues

**Investing in Resilient Agricultural Growth**

The European Commission recently reaffirmed in the Agenda for Change its commitment to action enabling recovery and resilience in situations of fragility. It should be approved in the Commission’s October Communication on setting out a resilience framework to better tackle recurrent food crises in disaster prone areas, for example the arid lands of sub-Saharan Africa, where most of the population rely precariously on agriculture or pastoralism to survive. Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt and to quickly recover from stress and shocks. The Commission will address the main components of the resilience by:
- Moving from responding to crises to anticipating crises by assessing the risks
- Focusing on prevention and preparedness
- Enhancing crisis response

To address all components of resilience, the Commission is adopting a multifaceted strategy involving local and regional partners and institutions. It will focus more on disaster risk reduction, prevention, preparedness and capacity building and will work on the root causes of food insecurity by encouraging countries where food security is critical to include food security
as a focal sector. The new integrated approach will address the root causes food insecurity in terms of:

- Food availability (promotion and diversification of food production keeping in mind the environmental risks and the climate change challenges, investments in infrastructure, research, extension and technology transfer); and
- Access to food (markets and safety nets, reserves and emergency stocks, insurance schemes, storage facilities and financial services to farmers).

The Commission also intends to make humanitarian aid more responsive to needs related to developing local capacity, supporting livelihoods and promoting disaster preparedness. It will enhance linkages among humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance and will frame a long-term strategy on building resilience. It will also focus on strengthening systematic linkages between information provided and policy- and decision-making at national and regional levels through strengthening a joint analytical framework prepared by humanitarian and development actors.

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme – Africa’s Home Grown Strategy

In 2003, the African Union launched the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) – an African-owned and Africa-led initiative to boost agricultural productivity. CAADP has been welcomed as a ‘step change’ in the way African governments approach agriculture.

CAADP’s goal is to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty through agriculture. To accomplish this, African governments have agreed to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10% of their national budgets and to raise agricultural productivity by at least 6%. This is being achieved through regional and economic communities, national roundtables and focuses on four key pillars:

- Extending the area under sustainable land management;
- Improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access;
- Increasing food supply and reducing hunger; and
- Agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption.

Through CAADP’s Multi-donor Trust Fund, development partners have worked together closely to support the initiative. The result has been a significant harmonisation of donor support for CAADP activities and investment programmes. More than 30 countries have signed the CAADP compact and more than 24 countries have established agriculture and food security investment plans.

The policy environment is the key to progress in agricultural development and poverty alleviation, which is why CAADP focuses on improving agricultural policy processes, including promoting the engagement of key stakeholders, such as farmers, the private sector and donors. Success stories include initiatives in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Rwanda.

Save and Grow – Sustainable Intensification of Crop Production

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) initiative – Save and Grow – recognises that the achievements of the Green Revolution in agriculture saved about 1 billion people from famine. Using high-yielding crop varieties, irrigation, agrochemicals, and modern management techniques, farmers in developing countries increased food production from 800 million tonnes to more than 2.2 billion tonnes between 1961 and 2000. However, these achievements came at a steep cost. Decades of intensive cropping have degraded fertile land and depleted groundwater, provoked pest upsurges, eroded biodiversity, and polluted air, soil and water. According to FAO:
[The] new paradigm of agriculture is sustainable crop production intensification (SCPI), which can be summed up in the words “save and grow”. Sustainable intensification means a productive agriculture that conserves and enhances natural resources. It uses an ecosystem approach that draws on nature’s contribution to crop growth – soil organic matter, water flow regulation, pollination and natural predation of pests – and applies appropriate external inputs at the right time, in the right amount.

“Save and grow” farming systems offer proven productivity, economic and environmental benefits. A review of agricultural development in 57 low-income countries found that ecosystem farming led to average yield increases of almost 80 percent. Conservation agriculture, which is practised on more than 100 million hectares worldwide, contributes to climate change mitigation by sequestering in soil millions of tonnes of carbon a year.’

To support farmers to ‘save and grow’ by testing new practices and adaptable technologies, FAO calls on governments, policymakers, and developed countries to support sustainable intensification of smallholder crop production. FAO’s Save and Grow strategy will be showcased at European Development Days.

**Food and Nutrition Security**

The term undernutrition encompasses a range of conditions caused by insufficient food intake and repeated infectious diseases. Individuals may be underweight, too short for their age (stunted), dangerously thin (wasted) or deficient in vitamins and/or minerals (micronutrient malnutrition).

Undernutrition is closely associated with food insecurity and hunger. Undernutrition is a physical outcome; food insecurity describes the socioeconomic circumstances whereby individuals or households are unable to access enough quality food for an active healthy life. Hunger is a term that describes estimates in the deficit of food intake for population groups – regardless of whether there is evidence of undernutrition.

Undernutrition kills more than 3 million children every year. For those who survive, it can have irreversible consequences on their physical growth and mental development. This in turn undermines every aspect of economic and human development. Up to 8% of GDP can be lost as a result of undernutrition.

Yet undernutrition is wholly preventable. There is sound evidence about which measures are likely to have the greatest impact. Employing available, simple, low-cost and effective solutions to prevent undernutrition is considered a ‘best buy’ in today’s economy. Proven solutions exist but require a comprehensive and integrated approach delivered as a food, health and social safety nets package. Investing in nutrition saves lives and contributes to building self-sufficiency and resilience to shocks. International assistance needs to be planned comprehensively to use all possible avenues to prevent and mitigate the very serious consequences of undernutrition.

Sustainable progress on nutrition and saving lives depends on contiguity between nutrition, emergency action and development. The critical requirement, always, is to ensure that the situation is analysed as fully as possible to determine the best course of action.

The European Union recently adopted several policies reflecting its increased commitment to fight undernutrition. Through different avenues, the Global Health, Food Security and Food Assistance Communications take the first steps towards a common framework for the EU and its Member States to combat malnutrition. More importantly, individual countries have launched their own programmes and strategies. This document is in line with these and highlights concrete steps to translate the political commitments into action and measurable impact.
Why is it so difficult to address the root causes of undernutrition instead of merely addressing the symptoms? Using the lessons learned from tackling the problem of undernutrition in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, a High-Level Panel at European Development Days will address how to develop models in regions where food insecurity and undernutrition are prevalent.

The discussion at European Development Days will focus on how various thematic areas can contribute specifically to improving undernutrition. Each theme has indicative programme contributions, plus relevant nutrition indicators. Several case studies illustrate feasibility. Nutrition benefits can be realised by adapting the design of programmes in all relevant sectors and thematic areas – from health to social protection, agriculture to water and sanitation – and by choosing appropriate indicators to monitor progress.

Participants will debate how to strengthen a coordinated response to food insecurity and how to break the cycle of famine and food assistance. There needs to be investment in prevention mechanisms and timely responses to early warning to stop and mitigate food crises, together with a more coherent and coordinated approach among humanitarian and development agencies.

The discussion will also focus on outlining the steps required to build an understanding of the nutrition situation in a specific context, negotiating with stakeholders to make nutrition a priority, and how to develop a plan for intervention. Nutrition concerns can be integrated throughout the various programming phases, so that it is analysed and understood within a given context and a donor’s response is designed so as to be coherent with the strategies and actions of the government and other stakeholders.

Each aid delivery method (budget support vs. project aid) offers an opportunity to introduce and embed nutrition-related concerns and factors. The process of working through each method tends to include several key steps that are common to all methods: situation analysis; designing assistance; monitoring and learning.

**Farmers**

The Montpellier Panel’s 2012 Report calls for building resilience in agriculture, which means supporting resilient farmers and their communities. Resilient farmers are able to generate diverse livelihoods and provide stable incomes, adequate nutrition and good health. In terms of smallholder farmers, this means being able to withstand stresses and shocks resulting from pests, diseases, market fluctuations and climate change.

Individual smallholder farmers and their families struggle to feed themselves – and with support, can bring some crops to market. It is recognised that farmers’ organisations are playing an increasingly important role in today’s market economy. Cooperation improves farmers’ access to finance, technology, land and water and to local, national and international markets. Importantly, farmers’ organisations can act as advocates and give their members stronger bargaining power in value chains. They can also advocate on behalf of smallholder farmers in the arenas of national and local policy, trade negotiations and development cooperation programmes.

For example, the European Commission supports the Support to Farmers’ Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP), initiated in 2009 to provide assistance to membership-based farmers’ organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. These organisations are comprised of tens of millions of smallholders and family farmers. The programme strengthens the institutional capacity of the organisations, and helps them have a greater say in agricultural development policy and programmes.

SFOAP is the first continental programme in Africa to be initiated by the four regional farmers’ organisation networks and that provides support from the ground up. The objectives and activities are entirely defined and implemented by national farmers’ organisations and by
each regional network. Funds are provided to the four regional networks, which redirect most of the funds to national organisations. The programme currently supports 55 national organizations in 39 countries, their regional networks, and the Pan-African Farmers Forum (PAFFO).

A High-Level Panel at European Development Days, Growing a Better Future for Farmers, will share perspectives on and debate the future of farmers in the context of new drivers affecting food production, trade and the environment.

**Social Transfers**

The food crisis drew attention to the importance of social transfers to ensure household food security, reduce poverty and vulnerability, and to support agricultural development. The Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA) published in 2010 promotes a twin-track and comprehensive approach for supporting actions that leads to food and nutrition security for all. This strategy gives social transfers a crucial role, either in the form of protective programmes (e.g. food or cash transfers to improve access to food) or as part of productive ones.

Different types of social transfers, such as seasonal cash transfers, food-for-work or vouchers, have been used in a number of countries to facilitate access to food directly or through the market in the short term. In the medium and long term, protective and productive social transfers also need to be scaled up as key elements of predictable social protection and food security strategies. In enhancing agricultural productivity, improving nutrition, reducing poverty or integrating environmental considerations, social transfers may help to address the structural causes of food insecurity. By preventing the potentially irreversible impacts of malnutrition in early childhood on later life, especially on cognitive development and education outcomes, social transfers can help to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

The EU is focusing on access to food. At policy level, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is the central objective of the EU’s vision for development. The EU supports the poverty reduction strategies of developing countries and accompanying measures to assist them in coping with the crises. The EU commitment to food security is enshrined in the Council Regulation of June 1996 on food aid policy, and has been enhanced recently by the renewed EU policy framework that aims to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges.

**Right to Food**

Social transfers are useful instruments to realise human rights. Social transfer policies – along with other social protection instruments – are implied in a number of international legal instruments, including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN 1966); the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN 1975); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989); and the International Labour Organization Convention No 1029.

A right to social protection would be closely linked to other essential obligations to ensure, among others, the right to food, access to basic social services, decent living standards for all, and assistance to persons in times of crisis. It would also have to include civil and political rights – to respect the principle of the indivisibility of rights. So rather than talking of a human right to social protection, one should recognise that ‘all human rights standards can be relevant for (social protection) and that (social protection) policies and programmes are instruments to realise human rights’.

The Human Right to Food adds to food security. In the Rome Declaration on World Food Summit in 1996, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed ‘the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger’. Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998...
Nobel Prize in Economics, concluded that in many famines in which millions of people have died, there was no overall decline in food availability, and starvation occurred as a consequence of failed distribution systems and the lack of purchasing power of the poor.

This led him to propose entitlement or a kind of right of the hungry to have employment so that they can buy food, and to focus on developing capabilities to be able to choose a valuable life that is worth living – emphasising among others the freedom from hunger as a fundamental freedom. Sen also suggests that the State is responsible for taking effective steps, including enacting laws, to ensure food security for all. Under the right to food: States have obligations and are accountable; individuals are rights holders; right to food links to all other human rights; principles of non-discrimination, participation and rule of law are integral to right to food; and implementing the right to food includes administrative and judicial recourse mechanisms (FAO 2005).

The European Commission has recently commissioned a desk study on 'EC activities in the Right to Food area and on the relationship between Food Sovereignty and the Right to Food', which concludes that:

‘The European Union believes that democracy and human rights are universal values that should be vigorously promoted around the world and they are integral to effective work on poverty alleviation and conflict prevention and resolution. The EC has made human rights a central aspect of its external relations. From the EC Treaty, to the European Consensus on Development, to several EC Strategies and Council Communications, the EU and EC provisions and statements underpinning the right to food are substantial. Particularly after the recent food, fuel and financial crises, the EU, MS (Member States) and Commission work has intensified addressing food governance at various levels and affirming the commitment to food security in realisation of the right to food and its relevance to Policy Coherence’.

Every human being has the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger, according to international human rights law. This is called ‘the Right to Food’. The right to adequate food covers quantity, quality, and cultural acceptability.

States have the obligation to respect, protect, promote, facilitate and provide the right to food. Some obligations are immediate; others should be realised progressively to the maximum of available resources. The right to food is not the right to be fed, but primarily a right to feed oneself in dignity. Only if an individual is unable, for reasons beyond his or her control, to provide for themselves, does the State have obligations to provide food or the means to purchase it. (Source: FAO 2005.)

Engaging the Private Sector

Eradicating poverty requires overcoming a number of challenges. These challenges are many and varied. They include, for instance, job creation. In much of the developing world jobless rates are high and women’s employment is low, while populations are growing. The lack of food security, sustainable energy supply and underperforming transport infrastructure hold back growth and development in many countries. These challenges have one thing in common: overcoming them requires private sector engagement.

The private sector can be a vector for inclusive and sustainable growth for human development. The private sector can – and should – make a significant contribution to achieving development objectives.
**Inclusiveness:** Agricultural development needs to be inclusive, ensuring benefits reach the most vulnerable and that risks are minimised. The EU seeks to invest in an agriculture that is sustainable, safe and ecologically efficient as a driver for a greener and broad-based growth that does not leave out the most vulnerable.

**Private investments and public-private partnerships (PPPs):** Private and/or public-private investments are needed in the processing (agro-industry) and product development sectors, where consumers' demand is changing very fast, together with product segmentation, private standards and food safety requirements.

The increased interest in PPP's in agriculture clearly offers an opportunity in the fight against food insecurity. Interests and objectives of private and public sectors can be shared to some point but they are not the same. The essential ideas are transaction and movement: efforts and progress are made together, and both sides respect each other.

**Value-chain based development:** The importance of sound value chain analysis with the participation of the main stakeholders cannot be overestimated. Identifying the different players, their role as well as the constraints they are facing, allow us to undertake concrete, efficient actions. These actions will address many different issues and offers a clear opportunity to carry out a real division of labour and to focus on everyone's added value and comparative advantage.

Small producers are active and essential actors in creating agricultural growth. The problem is that agriculture in Africa is not growing as fast as demography. One of the main reasons is access to capital, knowledge and markets. Governments have a critical regulatory and facilitating role to play to unlock the development of local value chains.

**Broad reforms:** Broad overarching reforms of the entire economy and value chain efforts can and should happen in parallel as they are mutually reinforcing. Value chain effort can only bear fruit if overarching reforms are being put in place (land ownership issue, company law, etc.) and selected value chains efforts have the merit of creating concrete test cases to deepen and complete reforms so that they can really deliver the desired impact at sector or subsector level.

**Governance:** Development will only thrive where there is democracy and good governance. Agricultural development must be supported and governed by competent and accountable institutions at different levels, effective policies and suitable regulatory frameworks. Governments are expected to ‘enable the business environment’ with good governance: the laws and their application, transparency and efficiency, relevant information to the investors, training of the rural population, decentralisation, credible conflict resolution mechanisms, know-how and capacity.

Domestic and foreign companies can retool their business models to better respect environmental standards, develop new business linkages and integrate local farmers in the value chain, include women, contrast child labour and facilitate their school attendance in rural areas. The financial sector must be a stakeholder in agricultural development.

**Importance of regional integration:** For the effective functioning of and trade along corridors, the regional integration agenda is also central, both in relation to the planning and implementation of infrastructure, harmonising transport and product regulations, liberalising transport services, dealing with customs barriers, etc. This set of challenges must be addressed from the perspective of the overall regional integration agenda, which the European Commission has supported through the extensive regional programmes. However, just as importantly it must be a central design element in any approach to support corridor development.
Adequately resolving these challenges is paramount for attracting private sector engagement into such ventures and thus the effective use of PPPs. Funding for hard infrastructure should only be provided in the context of credible plans/approaches for addressing the regulatory impediments and other non-tariff barriers.