



EUROPEAN
GLOBAL
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MEETING

European Global Compact Local Networks Meeting

Public-Private Joint Efforts Towards Rio+20

Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture

- THEMATIC DISCUSSION BRIEFING NOTE -

Introduction

The 1996 World Food Summit agreed that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The number of undernourished people in the world, close to one billion in 2010, is - despite an expected decline that has been registered, for the first time, since 1995 - unacceptably high. This makes more difficult to achieve the hunger-reduction targets of the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goal 1.

At the European level, 16% of the population (80 million people) live on less than 60% of their country's average household income, and 17% suffer from material deprivation. Also 19% of children in the EU are in or at risk of poverty. With *Europe 2020 strategy*, EU leaders have agreed to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.

Food security is a priority area of concentration of the *European Consensus on Development*. The EU food security policy faces the issue on three dimensions: availability of food at regional and national levels, access to food by households and food use and nutritional adequacy at individual level.

With over 70% of the world's poor living in rural areas, support to agriculture and rural development is fundamental for reducing poverty and sustaining growth and development. Moreover, up to 90% of the population, in many developing countries, depend on agriculture and farming for their living, as these provide income, employment and food, as well as raw materials for industry and exports.

It is clear that rural economy and agriculture are key sectors for supporting livelihoods in protracted crises, but they are not suitably reflected in aid flows. Recent food, financial and economic crises, among other factors, have exacerbated the effects of longstanding underinvestment in food security, agriculture, and rural development. However, the European Union is the world's first donor of development aid, accounting for 55 % of the total. The need to speed up financing for agriculture and to invest in agricultural corridors is an important element of the European Commission's policy on supporting developing countries to move out from the crisis.

With over 56 % of the population in the 27 Member States of the European Union living in rural areas, which cover 91 % of the territory, the strengthening of EU rural development policy is a priority of the Union. The common agricultural policy (CAP) ensures that its rules are compatible with environmental requirements and that CAP measures promote the development of agricultural practices preserving the environment and safeguarding the countryside. Farmers are encouraged to continue playing a positive role in the maintenance of the countryside and the environment.

The Europe 2020 *strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* required to move to a low carbon, resource efficient and climate resilient economy by 2050 which will allow the EU to achieve its emissions reduction and biodiversity targets. This includes that the contribution of cohesion, agricultural, rural development should be addressed to climate change, in particular through adaptation measures based on more efficient use of resources, which will also contribute to improving global food security.

Support for biodiversity, water and energy and the fight against climate change are key areas for *Community development cooperation*. It is undeniable, in fact, that climate change determines further risks to food security and agriculture sector. In addition, its expected impact is particularly danger for smallholder farmers in developing countries and for vulnerable populations.

An important element of food security is food safety. The development of systems to prevent food safety threats and a fast response to urgent food safety situations would also have a positive impact on food security. Moreover, given the close relationship between human health and food, food safety is ever more an important global issue. This is due to the increasing globalization and complexity of the food chain, and not only to a rise in the number of reported food safety events.

The EU integrated approach to food safety aims to assure a high level of food safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health through coherent farm-to-table measures and adequate monitoring, while ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market. The implementation of this approach should assure, among other, effective control systems and evaluate compliance with EU standards within the EU and in third countries in relation to their exports to the EU.

Key challenges

- ***Eliminate causes of hunger and poverty.*** It has been demonstrate that countries can overcome situations of protracted crisis. This requires better governance, understanding structural drivers of the crisis and addressing them with effective policy actions. More and better donor coordination and local communities involvement are also essential. Besides direct actions to immediately face hunger for the most vulnerable, medium and long-term sustainable agricultural, food security, nutrition and rural development programs are necessary to eliminate the sound reasons of hunger and poverty, including through the realization of the right to adequate food.
- ***Poverty and social exclusion.*** European Union is committed to eradicate child poverty; to promote the active inclusion in society and the labour market of the most vulnerable groups; to provide decent housing for everyone; to overcome discrimination and increase the integration of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, immigrants and other vulnerable groups; to tackle financial exclusion and over-indebtedness.
- ***Sustainable crop production intensification.*** There is now a deep awareness that an ecosystem approach must support the intensification of crop production. The ecosystem approach uses inputs, such as land, water, seed and fertilizer, to complement the natural processes that support plant growth, including pollination, natural predation for pest control, and the action of soil biota that allows plants to receive nutrients. Sustainable crop production intensification, when effectively implemented and supported, will provide “win-win” outcomes required to meet the dual challenges of feeding the world’s population and saving the planet.

- ***Climate change and biodiversity.*** Solutions for climate change must include mitigation options and a strong commitment to the adaptation of agriculture, including conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture play a critical role in the fight against hunger, by ensuring environmental sustainability while, at the same time, increasing food and agriculture production. It is imperative to do so in a sustainable way: using resources without endangering the natural capital, including biodiversity and ecosystem services, and taking advantage of biological processes.
- ***International food safety and quality standards.*** The increasing geographical and temporal spread of the food production, processing and consumption chain opens up vulnerabilities at multiple points. Other threats for food safety are use of innovative technologies (for example, GMO's) and impact of emerging issues (for example, climate change). Defining common parameters for applying preventive or emergency measures, as well as harmonization of food safety policies in general, is a challenge. Supporting countries to achieve quality standards from farm to the table and internationally accepted food safety is necessary to prevent and deal with global food safety emergencies.

Discussion question

What steps can the private sector take – independently and in collaboration with the public sector – to realize food security and food safety, considering, in particular, the need to feed a growing world population, to answer to climate change challenges, and to realize social inclusion?