Interactive Thematic Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on the Global Food Crisis and the Right to Food
April 6, 2009

Introductory remarks by Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the United Nations General Assembly

- We need a comprehensive analysis in order to contribute to the formulation of solutions.
- Small scale, traditional and indigenous farmers make up 50% of the world’s food producers, but they also constitute a large proportion of the world’s hungry.
- Need to keep the food crisis high on the political agenda, why do we continue to tolerate hunger and malnutrition in a world of abundance?
- Need for increased food production.
- The UN has a central role in food security and access to food, to strengthen the global response and make sure we rely on tools that recognize the right to food as a right!
- The food crisis is a symptom of the selfish unsustainable state policies and models that we must find alternatives to, both internationally and locally.
- This crisis is directly linked to the financial crisis, climate change and the energy crisis, which need to be addressed through promoting a rights-based approach. This approach must take into account the needs of the billions of small-scale farmers whom do not have enough to eat and also the impoverished consumers “that face hunger in the midst of abundance”.
- Our attention has been drawn to the high costs of meat production and some methods of food production are not sustainable. We must change to agroecological methods.
- We need “new politics of food” that are created with a bottom-up methodology. Our new politics must be multifunctional, show concern for the poor, the earth and local communities and their right to food sovereignty.
- I have made the democratization of international governance bodies my number one priority. We also need a localized and regionalized food system.

Opening remarks by Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under Secretary General and High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS)

- Important to remind ourselves of the figures:
  - Before the food crisis 862 million of the world’s poor were undernourished. Last year an additional 100 million became at risk because of ongoing food insecurity.
  - Another impact of the crisis is that malnutrition is the underlying cause of the death of 3.5 million children every year.
  - The international community has the necessary means to fight this
- The Madrid high-level meeting expressed strong support for the Secretary General’s High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and its Comprehensive Framework for Action (July 2008). There was consensus on that all aspects of food security must be addressed not only the amount of food that is produced.
- This crisis is an opportunity to revisit past policies, to revitalize agriculture and to address the low production gains in recent years. Some countries are paying farmers that produce basic agricultural products. We should support such initiatives politically and economically.
- Need to strengthen global response based on the right to food as a human right recognized by international law. Efforts must be guided by support for the poorest and marginalized. A rights-based approach will also reside in more state accountability.

*Keynote speech by Dr. Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*

- The idea that the right to food should be at the centre of the efforts to reform the international food system is gaining ground. The system has proved fragile by being affected by oil prices and the conditions of the commodity markets.
- The right to food has been introduced as a third track in fighting hunger.
- **The meaning of the right to food:**
  - Producing more food and high levels of aid is not sufficient!
  - Those who are hungry and malnourished must be identified and then targeted by state policies and national strategies. This means mapping vulnerable groups, allocating responsibility between different levels of government, establishing benchmarks, timeframes and necessary institutions.
  - Any person who is hungry is a person whose right has been violated.
  - Some countries have (or are in the process to) recognized the right to food in legal documents; for example Ecuador, Guatemala, Venezuela, Honduras, Mozambique, Nepal, Brazil and Indonesia. These recognitions are more than statements. They mean that each individual has a remedy against violations. For example the Nepal Supreme Court recently issued an interim order that the government should immediately supply food to certain regions. Without the legal recognition of the right to food, this would not have been possible. The rights-based approach improves the legitimacy and effectiveness of state programs.
  - The right to food provides recourse to an accountability mechanism. Courts are empowered to protect the right. Not only does this enhance good governance, empowerment and accountability, but it also promotes the participation of those who are affected in policy making.
- The right to food is not simply the third track of combating hunger. It should be the overarching principle!
- We cannot only remove supply side obstacles and then think that the problems are solved. We need a different set of questions: What are the benefits of a policy or decision for those who are food insecure? Or will the policy or decision in fact press out small-scale farmers and increase the dualization of the food sector?
- We must identify who the vulnerable are and why they are insecure. The global composition is the following:
  - Small-scale farmers constitute 60% of the hungry
  - Landless farmers and agricultural workers constitute 20% of the hungry
  - Urban poor constitute the remaining 20% of the hungry
- Equal attention should be given to all these categories. There is not too little food being produced, there is a lack in purchase power and there is a need for protection of these groups.
- Affected smallholder farmers constitute 5 million households. The need to protect livelihoods should guide us when investing in agriculture.
- The green revolution in Latin America was successful in yields, but sometimes at a high social and ecological cost. Much care is taken to avoid these mistakes. There is some awareness of this, but we should make a comparison between green revolution concepts and alternative models.
• There are examples of sustainable agroecological approaches in reports by UNCTAD and other agencies. These models should be scaled up. The relations between these models and the right to food are that they take into account that places differ environmentally, that groups that are affected are involved in solutions and that models are consistent with combating climate change.

• The right to food is not only relevant on the national level. It should help in rethinking the international system. In the multilateral trade system a small group of countries have imposed trade distorting measures in the form of domestic support and export subsidies. The world is now paying the price of 30 years of neglect of this issue.
  
  o **To simply remove the distortions will not be sufficient.** For example in Benin the cotton industry has experienced a lack of access to credit and insecure land holding, which has made it less productive and competitive. Benin must be allowed to protect itself to mitigate its lack of competitiveness. The specialization in cotton has meant that Benin has not built a robust agricultural sector. The government now seeks diversification, which is a commendable effort. But, it is likely that Benin will remain locked into agricultural production of primary products, and will not be able to develop a strategy to obtain a fair share of international trade. Trade will remain asymmetric, affecting the terms of trade and working against the long term objectives to avoid poverty and hunger of countries like Benin. This is not acceptable! All countries have a right to development. **Without the right to development and through locking countries into agriculture, a new form of colonialism is in place. The developing countries are not allowed to imitate the development of the rich countries.**
  
  o Most of the trade takes place between companies, not between states. The role of these actors must therefore be reconsidered.

• Agricultural workers receive wages that are too low. 700 million men and women produce the food we eat but cannot afford food themselves. The International Labor Organization conventions on adequate wages and social security must be better implemented.

• In the upcoming Summit in Rome in November aid should be considered important but not the measure of success. The system is the problem, and the challenge is the possibility of change in these months. The summit should look at how states can be supported in their national strategies, framework laws and accountability measures. It should also look at assessments of different models, trade redesign to serve development, how the situation of workers can be improved, including wages and social protection, and incentives and regulation for companies.

• **The temptation to return to business as usual, with unsustainable inequalities within states and between states, must be resisted.** A new system is needed.

**PANEL I**

**Policy Choices and the Right to Food in the Context of the Global Food Crisis**

Mr. Sanjay Reddy, Assistant professor of economics at Barnard College, Columbia University; member of the editorial advisory boards of Development, Ethics and International Affairs and the European Journal of Development Research

• Problem of non fulfillment of hunger is not aggregate supply of food, which is important, but the problem of food insecurity is foremost related to inadequate distribution or the command of resources of food.
• **The trade system** has been approached as if the primary concern is to generate better allocation of production sites, giving gains in trade. Cost-efficient allocation of production risks a failure of attention to how allocation will affect **food security of individuals**. Food sovereignists, as opposed to food globalists, believe that the populations on a national or sub national level are a secure basis for providing for themselves from season to season. With trade integration this cannot be assured because of the outflow of food. For example, during the famine in Ethiopia in the 1970s there was an outflow of food from some of the most affected areas to areas where the purchase power was greater.

• Need to ensure that the **genetic heritage** of different areas is maintained with the positive effects that would have. Good arguments of the food globalists: export of food gives an increase in income and additional purchase power. Exports also provide food to food deficit areas. **So there are powerful arguments on both sides**. This is an opportunity for states to implement policies that recognize sound reasons on both sides. Internationally, the focus has only been on the food globalist approach, which has created imbalance in policy issues and insufficient focus on the right to food lens and food sovereignty.

• Food security is the product of actions of many different actors; states, individuals and companies. The cause mechanism is complex, hard to describe and predict. The right to food lens gives **collective responsibility** to generate fulfillment, but it makes it hard to identify who is responsible to take certain actions, which could be called **imperfect obligations**. It is imprecise in its distribution of obligations, but it is nonetheless real obligations. We should solve these imperfect obligations through international rules.

• **Recent trend in food economy**: food prices have gone up in recent years, now decreased a bit since there is less demand because of the financial crisis. Can we easily prescribe responses to the increase in prices? The increase in demand for biofuels has certainly affected the prices.

• How can we **implement the right to food framework** and make it more concrete and relevant? Need to put in place mechanisms nationally and also enforce global responsibility. Proposes a **mechanism of ‘standing social safety nets’**. This mechanism would expand when needs expand and minimize the need for new policy decision making or political prioritization. A good national example is the rural employment guarantee program in India, which guarantees 100 days of minimum wage paid work per year. This has the right to food at its centre. These programs are however potentially expensive for the governments, especially felt in times of national recession. Poor countries may face too many obstacles for implementation. Therefore a mechanism on the global level should be created. Rich countries could through this mechanism help poor countries to establish such programs.

• The trade regime reflects the **value chains in agriculture**. The **cash crop production** realized by farmers and landless workers because of corporate interests is a crucial issue that needs more attention.

• **Global fish stocks** have collapsed in many countries because of the failure to manage the international dimension of it. The over-fishing by foreign fishing fleets has led to this situation.

**Mr. Daniel De La Torre Ugarte**, Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Tennessee; Associate Director of the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center

• Agriculture is at the base of the right to food. We must understand what major factors in agriculture that makes it different from other sectors. **The agricultural system is basically unfair. It is an ecosystem-based sector which relies on land, soil and**
weather. Countries such as Argentina, Australia, the EU countries, Ukraine, USA, Russia, China and India have the necessary infrastructure, research and technology which has exacerbated their productive capacity which was originally based on land allocation. It is a dream to think that we can have level playing field since there is concentrated natural resources.

- On the price crisis: This is nothing new in agriculture. The last 100 years mainly weather events in productive areas in the world have driven spikes in prices. This price crisis is however created by changes in policies. The policy choices that are at the root of the crisis.
  - There has generally been a basic belief that the value of trade is above the right to food. This is exacerbated by the illusion that we can achieve a level playing field in agriculture.
  - From active to passive policy in food security: Heavy investment in agricultural exports were expected to generate growth, which would passively improve food security. There is an inequality in the food sector, where the focus is on production of goods that are directed at high income countries. In the spirit of more open markets many developing countries have eliminated support to domestic producers.
  - Speculation: due to the surplus of financial resources looking for return. The limitations in place to restrict irresponsible investment in the food sector was eliminated.
  - Biofuels is another policy choice, also overlapped by the first 3 choices.

- Need to change the paradigm: the right to food is the element that should drive the decisions and policy making and the right to trade should be second to this element.

- We have given up the ability to hold stocks that could be used in situations of emergency. What could we do with an international system of grain reserves?
  - Not to fix the prices, but to avoid very high or very low prices. High prices create too many incentives to expand production, which is an environmental trap. Low prices create too little incentives, making farmers go out of business. Both extremes affect the access to food. Avoiding fluctuation would indirectly bring the local traditional farming to the same footing as imported products.
  - It would create a more organized market. It avoids the circle of buying when prices are low and selling when prices are high.
  - Countries could contribute in different ways to a system of grain reserves.
  - Governance through a small organization in which export and import countries can discuss win-win situations, and for example impacts of climate change.

Mr. James P. McGovern, Vice Chairman of the House Rules Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, Chair of the House Hunger Caucus

- Hunger is a political condition. We can address and end hunger, but we lack the political will in the US and internationally. Everyone is for food security, but the number of hungry persons, 1 billion, is greater than ever. We have the food, the money and the infrastructure to end it, yet it has not risen to the top of the agenda. Food security was not mentioned even once in the presidential campaign in the USA.

- We do not need to produce lots of great papers but we need action from governments. Action come through national priorities, and we should demand comprehensive national plans with accountability.
  - In the US 36 million persons are hungry, and this is one of the richest countries in the world. This is a shame. We must translate “good intentions into reality”. Cutting taxes and other policies have been prioritized.
• The US supports international measures, including a **UN strategy to end hunger**. The recent **G20** meeting allocated new resources for these purposes. It is a goal of President Barack Obama to cut world hunger in half by 2015.

• Need to make sure that aid is provided in a way that gives food security in the long term.
  o Afghanistan: do not see possibility of stability if food security is not part of international efforts there.
  o Small scale farmers, especially women must have a central role.

• There can be no national security without food security.
• Make sure we pay a political price if we do not achieve our goals.

**Mr. Pedro Medrano, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean**

• All agree that hunger is a human rights issue. The food crisis is aggravated by the energy crisis, the financial crisis and the vast economic slowdown.

• The **right to food guidelines** [Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security] promote a human rights-based approach that will benefit the poorest without discrimination. This results in that the mechanism of public action improves, the hungry get a voice and become part of solutions and the agents of development.

• **Work of WFP**: Presently taking measures globally including assistance to urban areas, school feeding programs, nutritious food to women and children and helping low-income framers to enhance their practices.

• During the food crises of 2008, **protectionism contributed to the increase in prices**.

• Fast track initiatives and resources to **boost food production in the face of high prices**.

• Access does **not require technology, but political will**.

• Striking fact that in the past most of the **social protection** we had in Latin America was based on remittances, which has had high costs in terms of family life. Today there is no social security system in place to face the crises.

• Peace and stability cannot be achieved unless we have a world where no one is hungry.

**QUESTIONS**

**Sudan (G77 and China)**

• We deem it very important that the UN remains seized by this issue.

• The right to food needs action focused on small-scale farmers and particularly women.

• Focus should be on stronger institutions, stable markets, enhanced production, research and targeted support to agriculture sectors in developing countries.

• The financial crisis constrains the access to food. There are multiple interlinked causes, including subsidies and other protectionism of industrialized countries.

• Revival of agriculture is a key issue and must be done through international and regional initiatives. **Emergency stocks** would minimize risks and volatility of prices. Also need to strengthen social safety nets in the least developed countries in the short to medium term and deliver efficient international emergency food aid.

• Stronger monitoring and early warning systems are needed.

• Need to improve distribution of food in developing countries and boost the food production. Both government donors and private investors are important for this.
- The completion of the Doha round is necessary, incorporating fair and free trade and long term solutions.
- There must be elimination of distorting measures by industrialized countries.

**Czech Republic (EU)**
- Reaffirmed its concern over the food crisis and its commitment to help developing countries.
- A human rights based approach is vital, guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Addressing the food crisis is the primary obligation of states individually and through cooperation. Efforts should focus on meeting vital food needs of their populations, especially vulnerable groups, with attention to national ownership and food security.
- Good and accountable governance is necessary. The enjoyment of all rights is critical to food security, for example freedom of expression can be a powerful tool to ensure other rights. There is a need to include all stakeholders. Vulnerable groups, gender aspects and equal opportunities must be included in the solutions.
- Need to increase food production in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries. Increased production should take into account small-scale farmers and sustainability. Social safety nets must be expanded.
- Need action to help the most affected populations to get access to food.

**Mexico (Rio Group)**
- Food security and volatility of prices are challenges to exercise the right to food and progress of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Need specific measures to guarantee food security, especially for groups affected by price volatility
  - In the medium and long term coordinated actions are required as well as a strengthening of agricultural production.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has a pivotal role in boosting actions on food security, for example through the Rome declaration and the reference framework to combat hunger and malnutrition. Strengthen the FAO.
- Mexico reaffirms its belief that the right to food is a fundamental right.
- Calls for a successful conclusion of the Doha round, including stopping subsidies and promoting technology transfer and necessary research to cover the needs of all.
- Development strategies are national decisions, but we should avoid national measures that have impact on international markets. Scientific research guarantees sustainability. Biofuels and affordable food can coexist.

**Bangladesh (Group of Least Developed Countries)**
- The food crisis still exists and at the same time the economic situation is worsening.
- The least developed countries (LDC) are hardest hit by the crisis. Most of the least developed countries are net importers of food, and their import bills increased by 37% in 2007.
- Agricultural sectors are severely affected, through financing problems, and more people are likely to fall under the hunger line.
- The right to food is an inherent right according to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
The guidelines on the right to food[^1] focus on access to safe and nutritious food. The international community must implement this and make sure to compensate for the agricultural inequality.

- **Investment** must increase. The LDC cannot mobilize these resources individually. The pledges from Rome must be delivered!
- **Technology must be transferred**, the water crisis must be solved and the growing impact of climate change on hunger must be addressed.
- The financial crisis must be overcome along with its impact on food security. The bailouts must be designed not to lead to further protectionism.
- In the multilateral trade routes, the specificity of agricultural production in this regime is of importance, and *small-scale farmers* in the LDC must be shielded.
- South-south cooperation must increase.

**South Africa (Africa Group)**

- Supports the concept of right to food.
- The realization of the right to food means possible review of any policy which could have a negative impact on the right to food. We must support national and regional efforts, agricultural development, transfer of technology and also **appreciate the gender sensitive dimension to the right.**
- To solve the food crisis, we need to ensure that **economic and social rights have the same standing as civil and political rights.** The impact on the world’s poorest through high prices threatens stability and peace.
- Africa has a regional initiative for agricultural policy, but needs international funding. An international assessment of the situation is needed to ensure that **we can have our own green revolution.**
- **A new global partnership** is needed for food security, not simply to boost supply technology, but to **empower the hungry and malnourished. Women and girls are disproportionately affected,** twice as many women are likely to die of hunger and be affected by malnutrition than men.
- Subsidies in developed countries must be diminished. The Doha round is an indispensable part of a long term solution in this regard.
- A global partnership would be more comprehensive since all concrete actions aimed at fulfilling the right to food would fall within this framework.

**Colombia**

- The Colombian **constitution** protects food production and in the regulatory framework the right to food is linked to other fundamental rights.
- **Need for rural development policies.** These should be high impact policies to support nutrition of the weakest parts of society.
- The **international perspective should be pragmatic,** with agreements and cooperation intended to have concrete impact on the ground. The development focus should be maintained. **It should be clear that combating hunger is linked to poverty eradication.**
- In the discussion of the food crisis the price volatility and the diagnosis of causes and solutions are brought up. The actions needed are: strengthening of **technology transfer** to support implementation of climate change measures, addressing existing **inefficiency in rural production** and respond to **trade policies** which have

[^1]: “Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.”
discouraged investment in developing countries. This means reducing agricultural subsidies and protectionism in developed countries.

- We must also execute already agreed actions in the Rome declaration etc.
- Question to Sanjay Reddy on the right to food as a right which generates “imperfect obligations”: How can we understand the right to food, and the obligations that it entails, when we have a crisis caused by macroeconomic causes which go beyond national borders?

Russia

- The food crisis jeopardizes the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Russia is increasing their donor contribution to the World Food Programme and is giving 25 million to the World Bank to combat the food crisis.
- It is clear that the global food crisis is due to many causes. Due attention is not being paid to problems in agriculture, such as the insufficient agricultural development, credit conditions for agricultural producers and the aggravated investment climate. There is a need for collective measures, in the short, medium and long term. The Secretary General’s High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis is a good basis. Need an implementation program on the country level and a global partnership with civil society, consumers and business involved. Believe that the establishment of such an initiative should take place through the UN General Assembly in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Global food reserves would mean significant resources for distribution and management. States and businesses must work jointly to combat speculation and price volatility and to stabilize the global food market.
- Mentioned the world grain forum in St Petersburg in June, which will focus on food security and the creation of a sustainable and secure grain market.

National Family Farmers Coalition

- Question: in development of global food reserves, how can farmers participate in this and is it possible that they could have reserves on their farms?
- Family farmers must be part of the efforts to combat the food crisis.

ANSWERS

Daniel De La Torre Ugarte

- We need to keep in mind the probability of reoccurrence of the crisis we are in. Reserves are important in that regard and it is possible that some could be allocated on farms. No country here wants to export less, if everyone is successful, prices will go down.

Sanjay Reddy

- On question by Colombia: There are certain obligations which we agree that we share. These are not prescribed exactly, because there are many different ways in which they could be allocated and parties disagree on what they have obliged themselves to do. Therefore we need to establish this in international rules.
James McGovern
- Everyone is saying the same thing, which means that there is an enormous amount of consensus. Why can we not move forward in a more concrete and direct way? What is different in our approach now compared to last year, or 5 or 10 years ago? How are we going to devise a common plan that results in political condemnation if we fail?

Olivier de Schutter
- On the question by Colombia: state obligations do not only cover their own population:
  o Must abstain from policies with negative impacts in other countries.
  o Must protect the right to food in other countries, meaning exercising control over private actors that act abroad.
  o Must support efforts elsewhere to fulfill the right to food.
- Important proposals are on the table, initiatives could be taken immediately:
  o Establish a **global reinsurance mechanism** with social protection schemes.
  o Smallholder farmers constitute the majority of the hungry. Their land is generally too small, which could be addressed through **agrarian reform**.
  o Establish an **emergency fund** with a reserve of food. For example 300 000 metric tons would allow for a more rapid response to crisis.
  o **Speculation** has not been sufficiently addressed here. Bonds are supposed to lessen risks, but we need better control. Hedge funds must therefore be better monitored, as has been considered by the G20.

Pedro Medrano
- The link between **food security and peace** needs to be strengthened! We only speak about food security from a rights point of view. We should take into account the **development point of view** too. The cost of hunger is 6 % of GDP in Central American countries.
  o The malnutrition and the migration comes at a high cost in development.
  o The right to food at an early age is essential, along with a set of rights addressing children’s development. A child’s brain is formed in the first 18 months of life, which is why we need to make clear priorities.

PANEL II
Answering to the Poor: Right to Food and Sustainable Models of Agriculture

Moderator Ms. Barbara Ekwall, Senior Officer of Agricultural Development Economic Division, Food and Agriculture Organization Headquarters, Rome
- A lot of areas of consensus exist. The question lies in the method for implementation.
- This food crisis is not related to natural disasters, but to structural causes and policy decisions. This give some hope that we can make better choices to rectify the situation.
- Eleanor Roosevelt said (in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) that human rights are not something that someone gives to you, but something that no one can take away from you.

Mr. Henri Saragih, Peasant’s Union of Indonesia, member of the International Board of Via Campesina
- This food crisis poses a massive threat to human kind. Via Campesina is working to address the situation globally with our members in 70 countries.
• The **human rights work** is important: The Special Rapporteur’s progressive move from a central model to a rights-based approach. The Human Rights Council session on the food crisis was historical.

• The right to food should become the framework for all. Farmers are discriminated against in their **access to land**. In the past 60 years **indigenous peasants have been heavily discriminated against**, directly and through a social structure that works against indigenous peasants. **Indigenous rights** could have a central role in leading the right to food and the rights of the peasant. Via Campesina’s proposal for a sustainable and just system of food for all includes:
  o Right to food based responses to the food crisis and promotion of the rights of peasants against violations by states and multinational corporations.
  o **Small producers and landless peasants** are particularly at risk. There are **systematic violations** of peasant’s rights, through expulsion from lands affecting their source of livelihood and their income that allows a decent life. Peasants are forced to buy seeds from large companies, which means a decrease in traditional knowledge coming from growing their own seed.
  o **Policy change** is fundamental to cope with the crisis. We have enough food in the world, but there is a monopolistic control over the system.
  o The concept of **food sovereignty**:
    ▪ **Food security** only addresses that people are fed. It does not address who produces the food, where it comes from and how it is produced.
    ▪ The **green revolution** is promoted by the current regime, but has proved damaging to planet. We need an ecology-based production.
    ▪ **Food sovereignty** is the right of people to determine their own agricultural system, products and consumption, instead of being governed by the demand of markets and corporation’s profit seeking. Also, distribution must be based on economic and social sustainability, including the distribution of land towards the landless, promotion of sustainability and the protection of own markets through rebuilding national systems.

• We must change the root of the problem. Landless and smallholder farmers have food available in the market, but cannot buy it because of low purchase power. The **right to food guidelines**² promote improvement of **land tenure**. This is needed especially for women, poor and other disadvantaged in society. Land tenure involves the right to inherit and land reforms to enhance the access to land for women and others.

• On the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and international trade: Agriculture that is labor intensive and produces for local communities and markets is an example of how food sovereignty come into practice. The Doha round should take note of this. International rules should control the **amounts** of agricultural products brought to markets, limit international **trade of staple foods** and make countries rely, as far as possible, on **domestic production** because it is the only way to protect small farmers from international markets. The **WTO has destroyed the international market and domestic production**. Through the human rights based approach the right to food can be achieved if we promote food sovereignty and the rights of peasants. Without food sovereignty, we cannot protect the right to food.

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² “Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.”
Dr. Judi Wakhungu, Executive Director of the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Nairobi, International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)

- Background to IAASTD: Assessment of the impacts of knowledge, science and technology on four of the Millennium Development Goals through an intergovernmental process with multi-stakeholder participation. A global assessment and 5 separate region assessments. 58 governments have approved the report.
- Key messages of the IAASTD report:
  o Agricultural knowledge, technology and science have contributed to food security, but people have **benefited unequally due to social and economic factors**. The food security has sometimes not been environmentally sustainable.
  o It is necessary to **target resource poor farmers**.
  o Demographic patterns and distribution will lead to a **different consumption**. Demand for food will double in 25-50 years and we therefore need sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.
  o **Problems that the agricultural sector faces**: less labor, less water, less land, loss of biodiversity, increasing level of pollution and climate change.
  o **Climate change**: Projected falling crop yields in many areas, particularly in developing countries. Extreme weather events; storms, fires, droughts, floodings and heat waves. The conclusion is that agriculture operates in a complex context. Agriculture impacts poverty and nutrition, but must be sustainable. We must create a space for all voices and well founded options.
  o The interconnectedness with food production stretches over areas such as health, diversified land use and recognition of traditional uses of land.
- **Situation in Sub-Saharan Africa**
  o Has the world’s fastest growing population, but the food production has not kept pace. Agriculture is the dominant land use, but the farmer population is aging and urban migration is extremely high, especially among men. **80% of food producers are women but men have the decision making power**.
  o The rapid **depletion of natural resources** threatens livelihoods. Progress is also undermined by **diseases** that affect the availability of labor.
  o Many technologies already exist but there is a **need for integration of traditional techniques in institutional strategies**.
  o Women are marginalized in terms of access to formal knowledge; percentage of agricultural work that they perform.
  o There are major challenges in focusing on small-scale farmers, understanding the diversified nature of farmers, creating opportunities for innovation that target poor farmers and increasing public research.
- **Options for policy makers**:
  o Increase focus on dry lands, fisheries, mountain ecosystems and climate change impact.
  o Regional cooperation.
  o Build rural social safety nets.
  o Enhance basic sciences concerning water and land problems and improve private sector and civil society involvement while keeping accountability.
  o From production technology to adapting to environmental impacts and appreciation for the innate capabilities of traditional communities.
  o Integrated solutions are necessary.
- **Conclusion**: Focus on real livelihoods rather than productivity. Use integrated solutions and improve synergies from a multifunctional approach.
Ms. Molly Anderson, Senior Wallace Fellow at the Wallace Center at Winrock International; and coordinating lead author for the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)

- Violations of the right to food show that the food system needs management improvement.
- On the situation in North America and Europe: North America and Europe have “under-classes” of people without access to nutritious food. One of five children in the USA are food insecure. Social safety nets are not completely amended by the measures that Mr. McGovern spoke of earlier. The USA is an example of why a rights-based approach is needed.
- New norms on resources that are needed for production is necessary. Norms have been created without respecting the rights-based approach and ignoring climate change with a possible loss of productivity of up to 50%, water shortage, land and soil degradation, peak oil, diversion of land for food crops to ethanol and biofuels, overuse of resources and structural processes controlled by a few food producers leading to a strong concentration of power. Mr. de Schutter spoke of a dualized food system, but the IAASTD found four different parallel food systems. They run on a scale from fragmented to concentrated and from a focus on profit to a focus on multifunctionality. With the clear stresses on the food system, a rights-based approach helps to rethink governance so that it serves the needs of the poor:
  - Redirect overall investment to women and smallholders. Strengthen community organizations that assist in dealing with shocks.
  - Improve knowledge generation and use through integrating traditional and institutional knowledge.
  - Democratic decision making and fair and equitable access to resources and markets. Measures of accountability must be established and enforced.
  - We must manage for multifunctionality. This means empowering marginalized stakeholders and establishing fair market and trade policies. Production should also be multifunctional, which is helped by the increasing demand for sustainably produced products. Demand for biofuel increases the per capita land use. We need moral constraints to how we use land.
  - We must also manage for resilience, including promoting diversity of crops, changing the business models, establishing food reserves, decentralizing the food system, learning from best practices and promoting polycultures.
- Food systems that value multifunctionality have many advantages for resilience. Multifunctionality mitigates climate change, protects water sheds, secures decent livelihoods for farmers and workers, buffers from global shocks and uses less fossil fuels. The argument that “sustainable agriculture cannot feed the world” could not be more wrong. Sustainable agriculture is the only kind of agriculture that can feed the world!

Mr. Miguel Altieri, Professor of AgroEcology at UC Berkley, Advisor to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – Globally Indigenous Agricultural Heritage Systems

- Signs and results of the crisis are in the multinational corporations and the applied industrialized model. It was thought that technology from the North was the only way to close the North-South gap. There are clear examples, such as the case of Chinampas in Mexico, that sustainable models were double as effective as green revolution alternatives, but since industrial corporations benefited from the latter it prevailed.
• **Biofuels and soybean:** These commodities pushed farmers in Argentina into dependence. The necessity of machinery needed for the production and the minimum of 500 hectares for the technology to give return has put 60,000 farmers out of business. When farmers now try to change from this production they face soybean that cannot be removed from fields because of its innate resistance.

• **Major challenges:**
  - To make agriculture independent of petroleum and eliminate control by large corporations.
  - Promote indigenous knowledge that is economically and environmentally sound. Use the examples of the many farms that are successful.
  - According to FAO data there are models that are 200 percent more productive in output because they use synergies between systems. With the FAO models, all that a family needs is produced in half a hectare, while providing a surplus that takes them above the poverty line. We must use the resources much more efficiently relying on polyculture models.
  - There are now deserts after soybean and biofuel production. The only areas that are producing food are resistant farmers that find traditional ways of dealing with symptoms of climate change such as frost. This entails the reconstruction of landscapes and water sheds. In for example Honduras, monocultures of the green revolution suffer the most from hurricanes.
  - There are 1,2 billion people in slums. Urban agriculture is the solution! In Cuba urban agriculture produces 60% of the vegetables consumed in cities.

• **We need international recognition of the agroecological approach.** Latin American countries are doing constitutional projects incorporating the agroecological approach. In Bolivia domestic production has increased and the hope is that it will reach 70% of the production instead of relying on imports. The agroecological approach promotes food and energy sovereignty. **It is the only viable model today,** as it confronts climate change, the energy crisis, the financial crisis and the marginalization of farmers.

**QUESTIONS**

**Italy**
- On the morning panel: Italy aligns with the EU statement. Underlined the importance of food security, global efforts to respond to the crisis, Food and Agriculture Organization reform and regional initiatives such as the EU food facility.

**Brazil**
- Support the G77 and Rio Group statements.
- All agree that the right to food should be ensured. In order to implement it, there must be enough supply to meet the increased demand. This prompts two questions: How can governments ensure the right to food when they lack the needed funds to get food? How could food production respond to the demand arising from fulfillment of the right to food?
- In Brazil a special zero-hunger programme carries out direct distribution of food purchased by the government for 50 million Brazilians. Household farmers produce most of the food consumed in Brazil, which the government encourages.
- **Speakers have brought up biofuels as a stress on the food system, but not the unfair subsidies implemented by developed countries.** Why is this being left out?
• **Priority should be given to food security but this is a political decision.** What price are our governments ready to pay? **Governments have scarce resources that are also supposed to cover health, education and other essential activities.**

**Bosnia Herzegovina**
• Bosnia Herzegovina recognizes the right to food as a human right. Human rights are interrelated and indivisible and hunger constitutes a violation of human dignity.

**India**
• Supports the G77 statement.
• Subsidies must be abolished and **major reliance on imports in such a basic necessity must be avoided.** Volatility in prices does not help neither the farmer nor the consumer. Agriculture is a livelihood issue in many developing countries.
• Climate change affects developing countries through adverse impacts on production and we must **invest even more to counter this.**
• **Food bank initiatives** have potential. There is such a regional initiative in Asia that could serve as a good example. Self-sufficiency is important.
• Nutrition deficiency in India still high, which has produced a national initiative which guarantees rural employment with prices set by the government creating incentives for farmers.

**Uruguay**
• Supports the statements of the G77 and the Rio Group.
• Considers the right to food as a fundamental right.
• Correcting **distortions in the trade system** is decisive in ensuring that countries can meet the immediate food needs. Allow countries to export food by eliminating tariffs and other barriers, giving a fair and balanced global agricultural market.
• Development and human rights are interrelated. Poverty continues to be the most serious violation of human rights. We need access to markets for developing countries.
• No lasting solutions unless we tackle these causes. **We must liberalize trade, transfer technology to increase food production** and create access for those who need it most.

**Canada**
• The number of malnourished persons constitute one fifth of humanity. The global credit crunch means less investment in agriculture.
• Canada is the fourth largest contributor to the World Food Programme with 300 million dollars in 2008-2009.
• **Aid is important as well as trade liberalization,** to which Canada remains committed. Adequate food must be seen as part of people’s livelihood.
• Question: The volatility of prices influence consumers and producers but **government regulation in the form of prices controls** also hurt producers and consumers. The views on this of the first panel? [not answered]

**Indonesia**
• Supports the G77 statement.
• Policy areas that are important to uphold the right to food:
  o **Legal empowerment of the poor in rural areas and access to property** is central to achieve food security.
Need to strengthen food security safety nets. This should be done through having buffer stocks at hand, using international cooperation.

**World trade**: Subsidies in developed countries mean that developing countries import from them since their own producers cannot compete.

**Food crisis and financial crisis**: need to better regulate food. There has been a mismatch between production innovation and reality. Food trade has been used as a capital market.

- Question on the morning session: what kind of incentives should be put in place for transnational companies in order to fulfill the right to food?

**Australia**

- It is time to move from dialogue to action. A comprehensive framework for action is already in place, we need to execute it.
- Provision of immediate assistance for the hungry through food aid is necessary.
- We need measures to reduce poverty which is the greatest cause of food insecurity. Focus on investment in agricultural research and address market failures.
- Removal of distortions for trade that contribute to volatility in prices and hinder access to markets for developing countries. The Doha round should reduce subsidies in developed countries, increase food output and establish more efficient markets.
- We cannot realize the right to food without enabling markets to work.

**Cuba**

- Food crisis is caused by the high price of oil, which increases the cost of production and transportation of food, and the demand for biofuel. At the centre of the crisis is the unequal distribution of wealth.
- Developing countries are increasing consumption, but it is sometimes taking place in a discriminatory manner. This is a problem of failure in access for the poor.
- Transnational corporations control funding, transportation, research, resources needed for farming etc. The rules in place in the EU and the US exacerbate this.
- Official Development Aid (ODA) is needed to fund developing countries’ problems with food shortages.
- Cuba considers the US blockade as one of the main reasons for food shortage problems in Cuba.

**Nigeria**

- Supports the statements by the G77 and the African Group.
- Asked the World Food Programme representative to what extent the UN system has succeeded in mobilizing the 8-10 billion dollars that are required to launch an African green revolution.
- Concerted efforts by international community is needed to support Africa in drought technology and pest and resistant crops knowledge.

**USA**

- Every country has committed to the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving those goals require action now, in spite of economic challenges.
- In the G20 meeting, 448 million dollars were allocated for vulnerable populations all over the world. Resources will be used to provide temporary safety nets, technical assistance, loans and loan guarantees for private lending and investment.
US support for agricultural development will rise to 1 billion in 2010. Support will be focused in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Subsisting farmers need reliable incomes. Need to stimulate economic growth in rural areas.

The US supports multilateral efforts in the UN system and the World Bank.

More than just additional resources is necessary. A comprehensive approach is needed with a stable food supply. Will launch such an approach later this year.

A comprehensive food security plan should be elaborated. **Food security requires much more than higher production**, including access for the poor, addressing the issue of water and caring for vulnerable populations.

**Benin**

- On the comment by the Special Rapporteur on Benin: These problems are due to the structural adjustment programs forcing Benin to favor crops for external obligations.
- Food crops are not profitable and the difficulty to obtain finance has not helped. The government is enhancing food production and introducing new seeds for this purpose.
- Benin concurs with the idea of **protection of developing countries domestic markets**. Massive imports of food does bad things to local food markets. Should implement agricultural subsidies because **total liberalization means exposure to external shocks**. We have avoided shocks of this crisis by avoiding total liberalization.
- We should **restore food self-sufficiency**. Processing products locally is linked to the **right to development**. It is also linked to the **monetary system**, where distortions are created by countries that dominate the international market.
- Promote adoption of new **family codes** improving the **status of women** in rural areas.
- We must increase **food security instead of dependency**. Cooperation with UNDP and south-south cooperation is important, together with mobilization of resources to support local initiatives. Projects should respect cultural legacies of different countries and the impact of climate change, which stresses water systems. Foreign assistance systems should adopt to climate change and focus on fulfilling the right to food.

**Switzerland**

- Solving the food crisis requires **national development strategies** in developing countries in order to reduce dependency on international markets and commodities.
- **Property rights** are essential. Ownership can give security to farmers.
- **Developed countries must stay open to products from developing countries**.
- Focus must be on finding an alternative **source of energy**.
- Question: IAASTD does not refer to the right to food. Would the recommendations have been different if the right to food had been taken as the point of departure?
- Question: the right to food guidelines\(^3\) encourage **domestic food production**. How should importing countries shift to domestic production?

**Norway**

- Malnutrition and hunger is a moral outrage. The effects of food prices are immediate.
- Long term responses should be based on national policies. The task of the UN is the role of supporters in these efforts.
- The increased focus on the right to food: The right to food must be an element in the approach. It **redefines the relationship between the donor and the partner**.

\(^3\) Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.
• Efforts to strengthen the international architecture should build on existing institutions. Norway strongly supports the reform process of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Emphasized the proactive role of joint UN action.

Czech Republic (EU)
• Short, medium and long term actions should be taken to provide predictable and flexible funding. Financing gaps must be identified and addressed, particularly nutrition assistance and support to smallholder farmers. Aid effectiveness is essential.
• Supports a global partnership, which should implement a comprehensive framework on food security and nutrition. All stakeholders, such as civil society, business and farmer’s associations, must be included. Sustainable rural development and agriculture is essential, taking climate change into consideration.
• The challenge of global food security is related to agriculture, but also to urbanization, health, development, cooperation etc. Global policy coherence is needed.
• Export restrictions are obstacles to the supply of food.
• There is huge potential for enhancing production in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is subject to implementation of agricultural policies, using research results, making micro credit available, improving infrastructure, empowerment of women etc.
• The EU has established a one billion euro food facility for developing countries for 2008-2010. There is a high cost for states of obligations under the right to food.
• Question: How can we guarantee good interaction between national and regional levels so that they become mutually reinforcing?

Venezuela
• The food crisis is not technological. It comes from social and economic problems. The Venezuelan constitution guarantees permanent access to food. Venezuela is one of the few countries in the world which includes this in its constitution.
• Solutions include regional cooperation, seeds innovation, use of new technology that is environmentally friendly and a plan for fuel used in agricultural production.
• Food trade must not become part of speculation. Instead we should support small-scale production. Free trade agreements should promote local production. The capitalist model has damaged agriculture and the possibility to eliminate poverty.

Kazakhstan
• Causes of the food crisis include biofuel production and climate change.
• Government measures are needed to meet domestic demand of food. Basic food commodities need regulatory measures, for example tariffs.
• Kazakhstan is preparing a draft law on food security. As one of the world’s top 8 producers of grain, Kazakhstan is concerned with falling prices. It will expand grain production with 100 million USD for planting crops to ensure this year’s harvest.
• Controlling prices is a top priority for the government. Measures are being taken to strengthen the supervision and to penalize hoarders creating fictional shortages of food.
• The main factor to solve the crisis is political will.

Russia
• According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states are responsible to ensure the right to food. Favorable conditions for self-sufficiency are essential.
• Traditional approaches have failed. Distribution cannot take place through free supply and demand, it must be done in a just way, not according to fluctuating political demand.

**Egypt**
• Food crisis must be addressed together with the financial crisis, environment, climate change, supply side constraints on agricultural production and trade distortions by developed countries. Commitment by donors and the UN system is necessary to address food prices. Depends on political will to implement initiatives taken.

**International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture**
• The work of International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture focuses on teaching people in communities, especially women and children, human rights based sustainable techniques,
• This crisis presents the most important opportunity to support food finance and controls as well as partnerships to end hunger and poverty.

**ANSWERS**

**Judi Wakhungu**
• Underscored the importance of working closely with smallholder farmers to absorb the latest techniques.
• Question by Switzerland on that the IAASTD does not refer to the right to food: IAASTD was conceived to assess four Millennium Development Goals. In the conclusion there is a synergy between the right to food and IAASTD’s assessment.
• Question by Brazil on biofuels: one of 8 themes in the IAASTD report is biofuels.

**Henri Saragih**
• Liberalization in trade of food has led to increasing hunger. In countries such as China and India the GDP increased, but at the same time so did hunger. The right to food can be implemented with food sovereignty, changes of the model of the economic system and food production and respect for the rights of farmers.

**Molly Anderson**
• Biofuels is an example of the failure to examine the impacts on human rights before policies are put in place. The production of biofuels is not energy efficient and not lower in carbon emissions. We cannot produce enough energy from biofuels.

**Miguel Altieri**
• Appreciated the interest shown in policies, trade distortions and commodity markets. At the same time interest was also shown to invest more in agricultural research. Where are these resources going to come from and where will they go? We need to change the paradigm and establish new institutions for this.
• We see new actors that are promoting approaches that are not useful. For example the Gates foundation is promoting a green revolution in Africa. Others are promoting genetically modified organisms. There are already many agroecological initiatives that have proved that this model works. This strategy does need resources, but only one twentieth of the resources used for the previous green revolution!
Ms. Barbara Ekwall, Moderator

- The crisis reveals the fragility of the current food system, which is good at producing large amounts of food but not in a sustainable manner. Alternative models have been proposed: the agroecological model, food sovereignty and ecosystem approach.

- How to make a new model operational, several suggestions have been given.
  - Identify the hungry and target them through policies and national plans. Put in place institutions, benchmarks, monitoring systems and claim mechanisms.
  - The methods mostly correspond to principles of international human rights law, such as accountability, transparency, non-discrimination and human dignity.
  - National efforts at the centre of solution with support of the international system enabling these efforts.
  - Possibility to feed ourselves depends on guaranteeing adequate conditions, including access to land.

Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, Concluding remarks

- Production models and consumption patterns must change.
- We should move quickly away from monoculture to polyculture production and end the harm of profit driven production on the quality of our food. The efficiency of small-scale farmers is striking in contrast to large-scale corporations.
- The striking feature of today is the diversity of panelists with compelling arguments based on science.
- The G20 held a meeting [April 2, 2009] after the last thematic dialogue. The food crisis, not to mention the right to food, was glaringly absent in the G20 discussions. The hungry cannot wait until tomorrow! The food crisis must be high on the international agenda.
- **Right to food**: There are numerous reasons to support a rights-based approach, most notably that the recipients of food aid are turned into right holders.
- If we are serious in our intentions, **subsidies** will be part of the discussion.
- The UN system, including the financial organizations, has an obligation to take into account the impact of policy decisions on the right to food.

Compiled by Cecilia Gadd and Hilja Gebest