

European Food Security Group (EFSG)¹

STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT +10

30th October – 4th November 2006

“We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all, and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015.”

(Rome Declaration on World Food Security, 1996)

In 1996, the Heads of States of 185 countries committed to halving global hunger by 2015. Ten years later, far from celebrating progress towards achieving this critically important goal, the mid term review has found that global hunger is more prevalent than ever.

All United Nations (UN) members committed themselves to halving world hunger at the World Food Summits of 1996 and 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, and the 2002 Monterrey Summit on Development Finance². Even progress on the more modest Millennium Development Goal (MDG-1) of halving the *proportion* of those who suffer from hunger is completely inadequate.

According to the UN’s Hunger Task Force (HTF), 852 million people are chronically or acutely malnourished today³, compared to 800 million in 1996. Hunger is on the increase in the developing world, and in most countries in Africa and Asia there is little hope of meeting the goal. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone more than 200 million people are undernourished, an increase of 30 million from a decade ago⁴. This negative trend is an atrocity, and a shocking indictment on those with the power to channel resources towards the eradication of hunger.

The causes of hunger are manifold; however, these complexities cannot justify inaction. Political engagement and sufficient resources must be made available to ensure scaled-up implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action which was adopted in 1996 and reiterated again in 2005.

As a group of European NGOs involved on a daily basis in the fight for sustainable livelihoods for the hungry poor, the European Food Security Group (EFSG) strongly urges policy makers - from developed and developing countries - to carefully consider the recommendations we outline in this document. These recommendations are based on a shared and rights based approach to the problem of food insecurity and its analysis.

¹ Members of the European Food Security Group (EFSG) includes: Action Aid, Action Contre la Faim, ACRA, Concern Worldwide, EuronAid, GRET, German Agro-Action, ICCO, Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK.

² Hunger Task Force, *Halving Hunger: it can be done*, New York, UN Millennium Project, p. 9 (summary version).

³ *ibid*, p.1.

⁴ FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005*, Rome, FAO, 2005, p.31.

I. Our approach to food insecurity

The World Food Summit (1996) established the most authoritative definition of food security. According to this definition, **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. This definition underlines the three pillars of concern as food availability, access and utilisation.

Food insecurity is clearly multidimensional and occurs in relation to these pillars as follows:

1. Availability: individuals become food insecure due to inadequate physical availability of food in their environment.
2. Access: individuals become food insecure due to inadequate social or economic access to food available in their environment.
3. Utilisation: individuals become food insecure due to poor food consumption practices.

The global realities of more than a billion people suffering extreme poverty, and 852 million people suffering from chronic and acute hunger, create a foundation of precariousness. Imposed onto these fragile circumstances is the fact that some 250 million people are struck each year by acute disasters⁵. The resultant spiral of decline is pushing increased numbers of people into vulnerability and greater risk of becoming undernourished.

From the individual perspective, food insecurity results from a combination of a poor diet, bad health and deficient sanitation conditions. Food-insecure people are those individuals whose dietary intake is inadequate to meet both minimum caloric and nutritional requirements.⁶

Food insecurity is a clear violation of the **right to food**, which is 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 (*WFS Declaration 1996, Charter on Social and Economic Rights, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food*).

II. Our analysis of food insecurity

Food insecurity manifests itself in a range of inter-related forms: acute, chronic and cyclic. The causes of food insecurity are complex and multi-dimensional, and include both man-made and natural disasters⁷. However, as NGOs with practical experience in food security, we recognise that food insecurity is primarily:

- **A problem of economic access to food**

There is enough food in the world to feed everyone (this situation is also prevalent in various developing countries). The FAO reported in 2002 that global agriculture was producing more than 2700 kilocalories per person, which is well above the minimum human requirements of 2100 kilocalories per day.⁸ The problem is not one of availability but rather one of distribution. Malfunctioning market systems and most importantly inadequate purchasing power are central to this. More people suffering from hunger are also poverty stricken. It is widely acknowledged that poverty is both a cause and an effect of chronic food insecurity.

⁵ DFID, *Saving lives, relieving suffering, protecting dignity*, London, DFID, 2006 p.5.

⁶ Additionally, some suffer hunger because of a compromised ability to use food effectively due to infection or disease (the so-called “hidden hunger”).

⁷ The occurrence of crises tend to decrease or prevent investments, thus enhancing the risks of chronic food insecurity.

⁸ FAO/IFAD/WFP, *Reducing Poverty and Hunger: the critical role of financing for food, agriculture and development*, Rome, UN, 2002, p.9.

- **A problem of discrimination in the utilisation of food**

Children and women are two of the most vulnerable groups to food insecurity. Women play an extremely important role in promoting food security both at the macro and micro levels, producing a large portion of food globally, and about 80% of all food in Africa⁹. They also play a central role in intra-household food distribution.

Nevertheless, women have less control over productive resources and household income, and thus have less control over their own diets, and that of their households, and continue to be bypassed by most agricultural programmes. According to the Hunger Task Force, “gender equality is not simply socially desirable; it is a central pillar in the fight against hunger”¹⁰.

- **A problem of agricultural underdevelopment**

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) 75% of food insecure individuals live in rural areas¹¹ and are highly dependent on agriculture for their survival. Small-scale farmers constitute the majority of the poor and are the main victims of hunger. Due to insufficient productive capacity combined with volatile and typically low agricultural prices, and inadequate market infrastructure, small-scale farmers find it extremely difficult to make an adequate living to support the food needs of their households.

A lack of institutional support (such as credit access, extension support, etc.) prevents small-holders from investing in their farms. The degradation of natural resources resulting from this lack of investment contributes to the vicious circle of poverty and hunger in rural areas.

A rural exodus is often a consequence of a lack of rural development. This can invariably lead to an acceleration of urbanisation and calls for specific attention to the supply of food to the cities and ensuring access to food for vulnerable groups¹². According to the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2006 – 2015, by 2015, well over half of the world’s population is expected to dwell in cities, and three-quarters of all urban inhabitants are expected to be located in developing countries. Dietary patterns of urban dwellers differ markedly from those of their rural counterparts. This could have very serious consequences for food security in developing countries and could “shift production away from staple commodities, compromising the food security of poorer people¹³”.

- **A problem of exclusion: rural peoples’ right to participate is neglected**

Rural communities are some of the most excluded groups from policy consultation processes provided at national, regional and global level. In particular, they have no say in agricultural policy formulation. This lack of political representation has deep consequences on their discrimination in terms of access to land, water and productive resources, and access to trade negotiations.

The existing gap between rural and urban access to educational systems aggravates the problem. The lack of availability of a quality education and of specific training opportunities in rural areas is a further obstacle for rural communities to become participants - from the local to the global level - in their own feeding and in global food production.

⁹ Hunger Task Force, *Halving Hunger: it can be done*, New York, UN Millennium Project, p.8 (sum. version).

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.9.

¹¹ FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005*, Rome, FAO, 2005, p.5.

¹² Vulnerable groups include: early school leavers, the unemployed, newly arrived immigrants, slum dwellers, workers in the informal sectors (often women), the homeless, street children, and people living alone with low income and without support.

¹³ OECD-FAO, *Agricultural Outlook 2006-2015*, Paris, OECD, 2006, p.26.

- **A problem of unfair competition**

It has been argued by the proponents of free trade that greater trade liberalisation will invariably lead to economic growth in developing countries, and economic growth will in turn result in a reduction of hunger worldwide. The EFSG vigorously contests such assertions.

In the first instance, uncontrolled trade liberalisation can be extremely damaging for emerging industries. This is now widely recognised by developing countries who believe in the need to protect key domestic industries from external competition. The least developed countries (LDCs) need special and differentiated treatment to protect their own emerging markets and industries; this principle is widely accepted within trade negotiations. Trade liberalisation cannot be indiscriminately applied. It must be contextualised and the speed and scale of liberalisation must be determined by national circumstances.

It also remains unclear to what extent developing countries as a whole will benefit from further trade liberalisation, if at all. A recent study by the World Bank concluded that the gains anticipated for developing countries in any new round of trade negotiations, will in fact be far more limited than previously predicted, with the bulk of gains accruing to the most developed countries¹⁴. As such the EFSG reaffirms what we said in 2005, namely that “trade liberalisation in some cases is not at all appropriate, as an instrument for development¹⁵.”

Furthermore, economic growth can result in decreased hunger rates, but this is not inevitable; even in developing countries experiencing strong economic growth, small-scale farmers are often those who are excluded and suffer the most from hunger. Economic growth must happen in conjunction with additional measures in the areas of health, nutrition, education, and equal opportunities, to have a direct impact on hunger.

Of course this fits within a larger and well recognised need for global change, but from this perspective, we assert that a more just, and poverty focused trading system, hinges on:

- Major investments in the capacity and infrastructure of the LDCs to increase their ability to trade competitively in both regional and global markets.
- The elimination of barriers to the produce of the LDCs by both the more advanced developing countries, and by developed countries.
- The elimination of export subsidies in developed countries which result in the dumping of subsidised farm produce on world markets, directly affecting the livelihoods of the weakest farmers in the developing world.

- **A problem of multiple diseases**

It is essential to recognise the disease burden of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as developmental problems, not just health ones. Between them, these three diseases kill more than six million people each year, the majority of which happen in Sub-Saharan Africa¹⁶.

HIV/AIDS in particular affects the most productive working age groups, is most destructive at the community level, and has major implications for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the FAO “AIDS has killed around 7 million agricultural workers since 1985 in the 25 hardest-hit countries in Africa, and it could kill 16 million more before 2020”¹⁷. Tackling the HIV/AIDS

14 - The World Bank’s report *Global Economic Prospects 2004*, predicted global gains from trade liberalisation at \$520 billion, \$350 billion of which would go to developing countries. In 2005 the World Bank’s report, *Agricultural Trade Reform and the Doha Development Agenda* stated that a successful Doha round of negotiations would result in global gains of \$96 billion, \$80 billion of which would go to the most developed countries

¹⁵ Concord, “*Shared principles for Advocacy on Trade, Agriculture and Development*”, August 2005. <http://www.concordeurope.org/>

¹⁶ FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005*, Rome, FAO, 2005, p.22.

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/FOCUS/E/aids/aids6-e.htm>

pandemic, malaria, and tuberculosis is quite simply imperative for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

III. The EFSG's recommendations

Based on the FAO's twin-tracked approach to the WFS and MDG goals¹⁸, the EFSG calls on the international community to urgently support the following:

Translating Political Will into Political Action

Both the FAO's High-Level Panel on Resource Mobilisation for Food Security, Agriculture and Rural Development (2001), and the UN's Hunger Task Force (2004) called for political commitments and will to be supplemented by *political action* if there is going to be a genuine effort to halve global hunger. As highlighted at the beginning of this statement, over the past decade we have had numerous declarations and commitments from the international community to halve hunger; the time for further statements is over. For 852 million hungry people around the world, *action* is needed urgently.

Greater support for rural and agricultural development

- Invest more in agricultural development

Because the vast majority of food-insecure people are smallholder farmers living in rural areas and because agriculture provides food production as well as employment, there is a critical need to strongly support the sustainable development of the agricultural sector (incl. access to agricultural resources such as land, knowledge, credit...). Funding is of course fundamental and central to this process.

We call on the donors to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) dedicated to agriculture, and to the support of smallholder farmers as a priority. Despite all the commitments to rural and agricultural development over the past 10 years, aid for agricultural production in Sub-Saharan Africa has actually dropped by 43% between 1990-92 and 2000-02¹⁹. At the same time, the FAO's capacity to carry out its mandate has been severely undermined with a 24% budget cut of its Regular Programme in real terms since 1994²⁰. As European NGOs we particularly call on both European governments and the European Commission to increase investment in agricultural and rural development programmes. Failure to do this will perpetuate the need for investing in short term responses such as humanitarian food aid.

We also call on the governments of developing countries, and particularly in African countries, to meet their commitments made in the 2004 Maputo Declaration to invest a minimum of 10% of their budgets in agriculture and rural development.

- Funding for the three cornerstones of food security

Increased funding for agricultural development must be directed towards a number of strategies including:

- I. Linkages with (local) markets should be strengthened, with greater diversification of incomes and production to ensure access to food.
- II. Developing social safety nets is an important action to contribute to the necessary increase of income and purchasing power for the access to food.
- III. Safe drinking water and sanitation are essential conditions to improve an enabling environment and reduce water borne diseases that play an important role in underutilising food, resulting in malnutrition. Nutrition education and counselling (including growth monitoring) are important strategies to ensure positive outcomes at individual level.

¹⁸ FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005*, Rome, FAO, 2005, p.28-29.

¹⁹ Oxfam, *Causing Hunger: an overview of the food crisis in Africa*, Oxford, Oxfam, 2006, p.1.

²⁰ FAO, 2003. www.fao.org

More open and inclusive policy making

- *Guarantee political and economic space for developing countries to design their own policies*

Many developing countries are strongly pressurised into implementing trade and agricultural policies that may conflict with their attempts to strengthen local and regional production and markets. The EFSG recognise and reaffirm the “principle of developing countries’ governments intervening to safeguard and protect people’s livelihoods and set their own course for growth, diversification and development should prevail over trade liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation”²¹.

- *Guarantee rural stakeholders’ consultation in policy making processes*

Appropriate spaces for the negotiation of food, agricultural and trade policies at the national level must be provided by domestic governments, particularly for the most excluded groups such as small-scale fishermen, farmers, peasants, indigenous groups.

- *Invest seriously in education for rural people, linking it with development policies*

The gap between urban and rural access to capacity building must be closed by improving both formal educational systems and agricultural/rural training in rural areas. Training and project approaches should be built up on local capacities and knowledge. Basic skills specifically related to rural livelihoods should be developed in rural communities at all levels, as well as technical competences in natural resources sustainable management, rural enterprising and policy negotiation.

More appropriate responses to acute food crises

- *Provide appropriate, timely, adequate aid*

Appropriate assistance according to assessed need must be provided in situations of food security crises. In many circumstances food aid can be an important and life-saving tool, but it is over-utilised. It is too often used when other forms of aid would provide better solutions for people at risk. Therefore, aid must be determined according to what approaches best address both the symptoms as well as the causes of crisis. In addition to in-kind food aid, this will include direct cash transfers, productive-asset in-puts and direct market support, among other interventions.

In those cases where commodity food aid is determined to be an adequate intervention, “it should be appropriate and timely, given, where possible, in cash and supplied through local, regional and triangular purchases. Recipient countries should have the right and possibility to refuse GMO food aid”²².

- *Ensuring predictable responses to predictable crises*

Many acute food crises are increasingly predictable, often being cyclic and sometimes seasonal. Such predictable crises require predictable and reliable responses. These responses should aim to both prevent and mitigate the impact and consequences of these crises. Such interventions include ‘disaster risk reduction’ (DRR) activities that aim to both reduce the risk of people to crises, as well as increase their capacity to manage when one strikes. Moreover, multi-annual funding must be made available, along with mechanisms established to ensure predictable assistance is provided to those people who are most chronically in need and most vulnerable and sensitive to crises.

- *Commit to finding peaceful solutions to political, ethnic or religious conflict*

Hunger can be both a cause and a result of conflict. Fighting against hunger and poverty can be a means of moving towards resolving conflicts. Political commitment is required to resolve conflict so as to prevent and mitigate the consequences of conflict on food production capacity and food security.

The causes of hunger and vulnerability are manifold. Despite these complexities, we cannot afford to fail in our struggle against hunger if we want to live in a fair and peaceful world.

²¹ Concord, “*Shared principles for Advocacy on Trade, Agriculture and Development*”, August 2005.

<http://www.concordeurope.org/>

²² *ibid.*

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