

Working Document for 5-9 May Session of Open Working Group

Reaction on Focus Area 2 “Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition”

This document aims at providing decision-makers and stakeholders with suggestions for comments and inputs to the latest Working Document, published by the co-chairs of the OWG on 17 April 2014.

1. Key messages

Participants at the High-Level Roundtable on “Food and Nutrition Security through Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in the Post-2015 Agenda”, from 27-28 March 2014 in New York, hosted by the Government of Benin, Biovision Foundation and the Millennium Institute, agreed on the following key messages and essential elements for the post-2015 agenda.¹

- Transformational change in agriculture and food systems is urgently needed to address unprecedented environmental, social and economic challenges and to nourish a population of 9 billion people by 2050, contribute to environmental stewardship in the light of natural resource scarcity, social equity, as well as inclusive economic development.
- A world free from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, where the right to adequate food is realized for all people, cannot be achieved without a shift to resilient, diverse and productive agriculture and food systems, which are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, with a special emphasis on small-scale food producers and supporting their livelihoods.
- A standalone goal on “Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition” is essential as growth originating in agriculture is more effective in raising incomes of extremely poor people than growth originating outside the sector, and it has multiple benefits for societies, welfare across the rural-urban continuum, and sustainable development.
- Such a goal and the broader post-2015 agenda should address the following elements. They can be summarized in the word **SHIFT**.

Small-scale food producers empowered

Hunger and all forms of malnutrition ended, and full access to food ensured

Inclusiveness in decision-making on sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition

Food systems established which are sustainable, diverse and resilient, less wasteful, restore soil fertility and halt land degradation

Trade policies reshaped and food price volatility mitigated

- Guiding and monitoring of the implementation of the post-2015 agenda related to food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture and food systems, can best be provided by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

¹ http://www.biovision.ch/fileadmin/pdf/d/news/messages_HLRT_29-03-2014_final.pdf

2. Suggestions for comments and inputs to the Working Document

Many of the outlined key messages and essential elements for the post-2015 agenda, represented by the abbreviation SHIFT, are sufficiently covered in the Working Document. However, some shortcomings exist. Therefore, the following changes are proposed to the working document in green. The rationales for these suggested changes can be found in Chapter 3.

Focus Area 2. Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition

End hunger and improve nutrition for all through sustainable agriculture and improved food systems

- a) all people have access to adequate (safe, affordable, diverse and nutritious) food all year round
- b) end malnutrition in all its forms, notably stunting and wasting in children under five years of age
- c) by 2030 ensure sustainable, productive, resilient and diverse agriculture and food production systems ~~with high yields, that maintain and regenerate natural resources and ecosystems by~~ and ~~reducing the~~ intensity of use of water by at least x%, chemicals by at least y%, and energy by at least z%
- d) by 2030 double smallholder food producers income and productivity through ~~achieve~~ access to adequate inputs, knowledge, productive resources, financial services and markets for small farmers and fishers, with a particular focus on women and indigenous peoples
- e) reduce the global rate of loss and waste along the food supply chain by 50 percent by 2030
- f) all countries achieve a land-degradation neutral world, including through ~~have in place~~ sustainable land-use policies and ~~by 2020, and all drought-prone countries develop and implement~~ drought preparedness policies by 2020
- g) ~~achieve climate smart agriculture that is resilient and adaptable to extreme weather including drought, climate change and natural disasters~~ [merge with para c) above]
- h) achieve by 2030 protection of agricultural biodiversity, including through use of the practices and local knowledge related to agro-biodiversity and diversity of food
- i) by 2030, contain excessive food price volatility (maximum standard deviation of x% from food price index over time)
- j) by 2030, establish inclusive, transparent and equitable decision-making processes on food, nutrition and agriculture at the international and national level [can also be considered under Focus Area 15 (means of implementation)]

3. Rationales on comments and inputs to the Working Document

Key Concern 1: Achieving food and nutrition security for all through a shift to sustainable agriculture and food systems must be set as a key sustainable development goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

Paragraph in the Working Document currently related to this concern:

"2) End hunger and improve nutrition for all through sustainable agriculture and improved food systems"

Suggested amendment to the Working Document:

None. The present formulation deserves unequivocal support.

Arguments and background notes to support this key concern:

- Transformational change in agriculture and food systems is urgently needed to address unprecedented environmental, social and economic challenges and to nourish a population of 9 billion people by 2050, contribute to environmental stewardship in the light of natural resource scarcity, social equity, as well as inclusive economic development.
- A world free from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, where the right to adequate food is realized for all people, cannot be achieved without a shift to resilient, diverse and productive agriculture and food systems, which are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable, with a special emphasis on small-scale food producers and supporting their livelihoods.

Key Concern 2: Small-scale food producers and other rural communities, in particular women, youth, must be empowered through ensuring access to productive resources, assets, and knowledge.

Paragraph in the Working Document currently related to this concern:

“2d) by 2030 achieve access to adequate inputs, knowledge, productive resources, financial services and markets for small farmers and fishers, with a particular focus on women and indigenous peoples”

Suggested amendment to the Working Document:

Reformulate target as follows: *“2d) by 2030 double smallholder food producers income and productivity through achieve access to adequate inputs, knowledge, productive resources, financial services and markets for small farmers and fishers, with a particular focus on women and indigenous peoples”*

Arguments and background notes to support this key concern:

- The role of small-scale food producers, landless laborers and other rural communities is of particular importance as they represent the majority of the world’s undernourished. At the same time, they are responsible for the majority of the agricultural production worldwide and therefore can be critical agents of change.
- Smallholder food producers must be empowered through access and control over productive resources, such as land, water, seeds, forests, biodiversity and fisheries, capital, access to fair and transparent markets, training and education, and off-farm rural employment opportunities. Particular attention must be given to women food producers and the youth and to safeguarding the rights of agriculture and food systems workers.
- However, only focusing on access to resources is not enough. A specific outcome target for empowering small-scale food producers is needed on this subject to encourage policies and actions to improve the livelihoods, in addition to those focused on access to productive resources. In this sense, language on increasing small-scale food producers income or productivity should be included in the target. This would reiterate the SG’s Zero Hunger Challenge call to double productivity and income of small-scale food producers.

Key Concern 3: Excessive food price volatility can exacerbate poverty and hunger, and may even be a source of riots or intra-state conflicts. As there is growing evidence that speculation in the commodity markets is one of the causes of food price volatility, international guidance is needed to contain excessive food price volatility and enhance food security.²

Paragraph in the Working Document currently related to this concern:

[no target / reference]

Suggested amendment in the Working Document:

Include a target under Focus Area 2 *“2i) by 2030, contain excessive food price volatility (maximum standard deviation of x% from food price index over time)”*

Arguments and background notes to support this key concern:

- The 2008 and 2011 food price crises exposed the problems of over-reliance on international markets and flawed trade rules, as well as the relatively new problems of excessive speculation on commodity markets. The deregulation of financial markets has led to a process of “financialization” of commodities, treating food, energy and other commodities as asset classes for speculative investments rather than the back-bones of stable economies and food systems. Extreme weather variability has also disrupted markets and pointed to the need for the reestablishment of food reserves to stabilize markets and ensure food is available during times of crisis.

² FAO (2012). Price Volatility from a Global Perspective.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/est/meetings/price_volatility/Price_volatility_TechPaper_V3_clean.pdf

G20 Ministerial Declaration (2011). Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture, G20 Agriculture Ministers. http://www.amis-outlook.org/fileadmin/user_upload/amis/docs/2011-agriculture-plan-en.pdf

- Implementing the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) as an early warning system to rein in volatile food prices would be a first step in the right direction. However, an explicit target is needed to provide for further international guidance to contain excessive food price volatility.
- Excessive speculation on commodity markets can be prevented through the establishment of commodity-specific position limits and increased transparency in over-the-counter trading. Another instrument, although politically sensible, is the establishment of food reserves, based on local or regional procurement, that not only support the mitigation of price and supply volatility, but also strengthen food security when domestic production fails. Discussions that began with the adopted Bali package at the WTO should be expanded and strengthened to give greater flexibility for public spending on national food stocks.
- In this context, we also take note that no explicit reference is made to ensure functioning and accessible markets for all, especially smallholders and women, through reshaping trade policies, including phasing-out export and other harmful subsidies. More ambitious wording under bullet point 15a) is needed.

Key Concern 4: Inclusive, transparent and equitable decision-making processes on food, nutrition and agriculture are key to accelerating progress towards food security and nutrition for all. Such multi-stakeholder processes must therefore be established at the international, regional, national and local level.

Paragraph in the Working Document currently related to this concern:

[no target / reference]

Suggested amendment in the Working Document:

Include a target under Focus Area 2 or alternatively Focus Area 15 (Means of implementation) *“2j) by 2030, establish inclusive, transparent and equitable decision-making processes on food, nutrition and agriculture at the international and national level”*

Arguments and background notes to support this key concern:

- Good governance at all levels is key to achieving sustainable development and reducing food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. Food and nutrition security governance is fostered through enhanced national ownership and democratic decision making at all levels. Multi-stakeholder decision-making processes and accountability systems at the national level, that correspond with inclusive regional and international structures are needed. Also, rights-based approaches, such as the right to food, must be explicitly referenced. Such processes must give particular attention to women, smallholder farmers, and other disadvantaged groups.
- Country-initiated, multi-stakeholder assessments of sustainable food systems and food and nutrition security are instrumental in revealing the sustainability of food systems, including the enjoyment of the right to food, and in addressing hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition with a long-term perspective. These assessments are a prerequisite for determining effective and foresighted food security and nutrition strategies and actions that accelerate progress towards national goals and targets. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is currently exploring options for how to facilitate country-initiated, multi-stakeholder assessments, based on the mandate outlined in the Rio+20 outcome document (para 115).

Key Concern 5: Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is not compatible with truly sustainable and multifunctional agriculture. Although CSA may contribute towards the mitigation of negative impacts on climate change, it does not sufficiently address the challenges of emission reduction and prevention, as well as adaptation. In addition, CSA does not consider other vital aspects of sustainable agriculture, including the conservation and regeneration of natural resources and ecosystems, as well as the socio-cultural aspects.

Paragraph in the Working Document currently related to this concern:

“2g) Achieve climate-smart agriculture that is resilient and adaptable to extreme weather including drought, climate change and natural disasters”

Suggested amendment to the Working Document:

Reformulate target and merge with target 2c) as follows: *“2c) by 2030 ensure sustainable, productive, resilient and diverse agriculture and food production systems with high yields, that maintain and regenerate natural resources and ecosystems by and reducing the intensity of use of water by at least x%, chemicals by at least y%, and energy by at least z%”*

Arguments and background notes to support this key concern:

- Addressing the climate change challenge associated with agriculture requires a shift to a sustainable agriculture paradigm, which simultaneously mitigates GHG emissions and improves resilience to the impacts of climate change. By placing a strong emphasis on carbon sequestration, CSA diverts attention from the real challenge of mitigating climate change: preventing or reducing emissions, as evidence demonstrates it for organic and agro-agriculture practices in the very first place. Emission reduction and prevention have significantly more environmental impact than sequestration. In addition, the sequestration is temporary, uncertain, and difficult to measure. There is also the concern that this market based sequestration approach would aggravate land and other natural grabbing practices by increasing the value of arable land.³
- Because CSA has not yet been clearly defined and is not limited to the promotion of context-specific practices and approaches for achieving sustainability, it is a very broad term and not compatible with truly sustainable agriculture. For example, conventional (industrial) no-till systems are heavily promoted in the framework of CSA. Such no-till systems often comes 'in a package' with monocultures, GMOs and extensive herbicide and synthetic fertilizers use.⁴
- Actors investing in CSA mainly use the term to develop soil carbon markets. It is important to note that carbon markets actually generate low returns for farmers and are associated with high transaction costs and privileged financing. In addition, there is a high level of uncertainty about the permanency of GHG reductions in soil and there is currently no compliance market that accepts soil carbon credits.⁵
- Natural resources and ecosystems can best be maintained by realizing the transformation to sustainable agriculture and food systems, including through integrated, agro-ecological and ecologically sound practices that contribute to restoring depleted soils, enhancing water reservoirs, and improving agro-biodiversity and livelihoods. In addition, agro-ecological farming makes agriculture more resilient, especially to climate change and its effects.⁶

Additional suggestions

- In bullet point 2c), it is important to recognize that in the context of SDGs, the term "high yields" should be mentioned in the context of sustainable agriculture and food system practices and needs to be further qualified as highly site specific. If the term "high yields" is not qualified, the result can be increased productivity and production through harmful practices and approaches such as industrial agriculture and other unsustainable agricultural practices. The context or site is important to define because producing high yields is only sustainable when the natural resources it is dependent on are not harmed.
- In bullet point 2d) we suggest to consider making an explicit reference to what the productive resources are: "(...) *productive resources, including land, water, seeds, forests, biodiversity, and fisheries, (...)*"
- Furthermore, we welcome bullet point 14e) "*by 2030, achieve a land degradation neutral world*" and would like to see it as part of Focus Area 2 as well since it constitutes an important element in implementing sustainable agricultural and food practices. In this respect we suggest the following amendment to bullet point 2f): "*2f) all countries achieve a land-degradation neutral world, including through have in place sustainable land-use policies and by 2020, and all drought-prone countries develop and implement drought preparedness policies by 2020*". However, we would like to underline that a land degradation neutral world may not be sufficient in aspiration in view of the large amount of land already degraded. The ultimate objective should be to reverse net land degradation, i.e. go beyond land degradation neutrality, which is the challenge that must be met in order to provide enough food for a growing population in a sustainable way, while mitigating and adapting to climate change.

³ <http://www.iatp.org/documents/soil-carbon-sequestration-for-carbon-markets-the-wrong-approach-to-agriculture>

⁴ <http://www.ikgroeimee.be/uploads/assets/332/1390912349733-201401%20Scaling-up%20agroecology,%20what,%20why%20and%20how%20-OxfamSol-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.iatp.org/documents/soil-carbon-sequestration-for-carbon-markets-the-wrong-approach-to-agriculture>

⁶ International Panel on Climate Change (2007). Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Chapter 8 Agriculture. http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg3/en/ch8.html