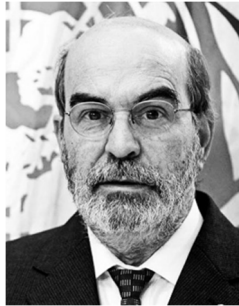


## The centrality of hunger eradication in the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda: a turning point for the international community and the Mediterranean region

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The year 2015 marks a turning point in the global community's approach to development. Leaders from more than 150 countries gathered at the United Nations Summit in September to agree on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that hold the key to a transformed global economy by 2030. The SDGs, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals, cover a wide range of socio-economic issues, including poverty, hunger, gender equality, sustainable development, full employment, quality education, global governance, human rights, climate change and sustainable energy for all.

Since the MDGs were signed in 2000, promising changes have already been seen. Progress against achieving the MDG 1 "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" was significant, with the target of halving the poverty rate being reached in 2010, five years ahead of schedule. However, progress in reducing hunger has been slower, with the hunger target having been missed by a small margin. The good news is that 72 countries have met MDG 1 and received recognition at an awards ceremony during the FAO Conference in July this year. It is important to acknowledge this commendable progress. Moreover, the number of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day in the world has halved since 1990, with around 700 million people lifted out of extreme poverty. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the challenges lying ahead of us. Even some of the countries that enjoyed rapid and outstanding growth over the past twenty years have not always been able to eliminate poverty and eradicate hunger.

Overall, the poverty and hunger picture in the world is gloomy. The figures are self-explanatory. Nearly 800 million people still suffer from chronic undernourishment, most of whom are located in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Asia, representing 14 percent of the developing world's population. SSA is the region with the world's highest rate of extreme poverty. Meanwhile, 70% of the world's poor depend on natural resources for all or part of their livelihoods. The many barriers facing the poor, and in particular smallholders, include poor access to and degradation of productive assets, and lack of access to infrastructure and services, creating a vicious poverty circle.

### **SDGs: towards inclusive growth and development**

How can this poverty trend be reversed? Combating exclusion of the world's poorest people entails looking at the issue of poverty and hunger through a multi-faceted lens. At the same time, the root causes need to be addressed from the social, economic and environmental perspectives in an integrated fashion. One of the main lessons learned from the MDGs is that successfully addressing poverty and hunger requires simultaneously tackling factors such as livelihood needs, food security, nutrition, health, education, employment, equality, inclusive growth, and access to basic infrastructure and services. Experience from FAO and other UN agencies has shown the benefits of integrated policy approaches to address the multidimensional challenges of poverty and hunger.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development needs to trigger deep transformation, based on a set of integrated, actionable and people-centered SDGs that leave no-one behind. The root causes of poverty, exclusion, inequality and natural resource degradation must be addressed, while inclusive approaches to growth and development must be pursued, not only economically but environmentally and socially too. This people-centered development agenda is about focusing on people as rights holders and not only as stakeholders. Both men and women need to be provided with equal access to productive resources as well as to decision-making processes. This is the only way that prosperity can become sustainable and create pathways out of poverty. In other words, only a transformative development agenda can bring change through improved livelihoods. Hunger eradication is key for progress on all the other goals.

## **Ending hunger and poverty at the center of the SDGs**

Given that the majority of the poor are located in rural areas in developing countries, it is logical that food security and rural development be at the center of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda endorses the vision of a world free from hunger and malnutrition. For the first time ever, agriculture and food security have been placed at the center of the goals and rightly so. Indeed, in order to feed a growing world population, expected to exceed 9 billion by 2050, we already know that food production needs to increase by 60 percent, and this at a time when agriculture is already facing unprecedented pressure from a degraded natural resource base and from the adverse effects of climate change. We also know that investment gaps and lack of social protection are fixable parts of the reality of many developing countries. A recent report, published by FAO in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), has estimated that it would take an additional US \$265 billion annually to end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030. This cost is minor compared to the significant costs of hunger and malnutrition that societies bear in the form of productivity losses and health care spending. These costs are estimated to reach USD 3.5 trillion a year.

More specifically, SDGs 1 and 2 focus on ending poverty and hunger in a holistic fashion. They give special attention to the role of social protection, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, resilience, sustainable management of natural resources and rural development. SDG2 in particular demands a comprehensive, holistic and time-bound framework to “end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.” These goals are central in that their achievement will have positive impacts on the rest of the SDGs, in particular: inequality; inclusive and sustainable growth; health; gender equality; sustainable production and consumption; climate change; oceans and seas; ecosystems, biodiversity and forests; and peaceful societies.

Eradication of hunger and extreme poverty is possible in our lifetimes. We can be the Zero Hunger generation. There is indeed an emerging consensus among the international community around this powerful goal.

### **FAO and the Rome-based UN agencies’ actions within the 2030 agenda: hunger eradication and poverty reduction.**

It is worth underlining the critical role played by FAO, alongside the sister Rome-based UN agencies (RBAs), namely the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as major non-state actors and organizations, in advocating for placing the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty at the center, which constitutes the transformative dimension of the 2030 agenda.

Indeed, as part of this effort, Member States have recognized the RBA partnership’s major role, through their policy and technical support, in setting SDG 2, “Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture”, and its related targets and indicators. Early in the process, the RBAs jointly identified and prioritized indicators for SDG 2, submitting a joint proposal of 14 indicators for 8 targets.

The RBAs also joined forces to advocate for the importance of securing financing for food security and nutrition ahead of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015. We prepared a joint think-piece underlining that, in defining a financing framework for the 2030 agenda, the international community should give high priority to allocating resources to ending hunger and malnutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture and inclusive rural development. In the same vein, our organizations drew attention to how a financial framework based on the joint think-piece could help achieve SDG 2.

### **FAO’s response**

#### *FAO priorities and vision in the context of Agenda 2030*

Even if each country is called to develop its own strategies to reach the goals, there are some common elements, namely political will, inclusive economic growth, agricultural modernization, support to family farming, presence of effective social protection systems and the integrated linking of different actions.

In this context, FAO stands ready to increase its support to all nations that make the political commitment to strengthen efforts against hunger and malnutrition. According to the latest FAO report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World, 795 million people around the world are still going to bed hungry and chronically undernourished. Urgent action is needed to reverse this unacceptable situation in a world of plenty.

At the same time, malnutrition remains a vast and often acute problem. Two billion people are micronutrient deficient, while 1.4 billion individuals are overweight. Obesity is a growing concern affecting 500 million individuals. In the Mediterranean region, a recent report by FAO and CIHEAM has showed a shift away from an ancient diet long considered a model for healthy living and sustainable food systems that preserves the environment and empowers local producers. While Southern Mediterranean countries continue to struggle with undernutrition, countries throughout the region increasingly struggle with obesity and overweight.

Last year, FAO and the WHO co-organized the Second International Conference on Nutrition. FAO, created 70 years ago, was called upon to play a leadership role in improving nutrition and strengthening linkages with food systems. We need both food and nutrition security. Quantity and quality of food are both important.

FAO's main priority and global challenge remains ending hunger and malnutrition, and this has become a pillar of the SDGs. Indeed, in 2013, through a focused strategic framework, FAO elevated the first global goal from "reduce" to "eradicate" hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. It has reoriented its priorities around five strategic objectives. The implementation of this framework is leveraged by partnerships within and outside the UN system, including with regional organizations and non-state actors such as civil society organizations, the private sector, producer organizations and cooperatives, as well as academia and research institutions.

How do these SDGs and challenges translate into FAO's vision? How can FAO, hand in hand with a wide range of stakeholders, act in a responsible and efficient way, thus contributing meaningfully to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development? The FAO Conference in 2015 sent a strong sign of support for continuing the direction that we set out in 2012. It has endorsed the following key priorities for the coming years: eradication of hunger, raising levels of nutrition and addressing climate change. In order to overcome the global hunger challenge, we will ensure that FAO continues to offer holistic support at various levels: sustainable production and management of natural resources, social protection and poverty eradication, improving access to markets by family farmers and helping build resilience of rural populations.

The year 2015 is also set to become a landmark with the negotiation of a global agreement on climate change during the 21st conference of the parties (COP) in Paris. We hope that this event will culminate with a global agreement of historic importance for humanity. Today, climate change is viewed as one of the biggest challenges for agriculture, indeed placing many regions of the world at risk. Being severely affected, the Mediterranean region is one of the world's climate hotspots. Agriculture should be viewed as part of the solution to adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects, and not part of the problem. Agriculture needs to be present on the international agenda for climate change.

*The MENA region at the heart of FAO's priority actions: integrated actions on Smallholders, water scarcity and resilience*

The Mediterranean region is experiencing drastic changes with unprecedented challenges linked to food, climate and rural insecurities. At the same time the region holds great potential with its very specific agro-ecological, climatic conditions as well as peculiar socio-economic, cultural and historical features. In order for Mediterranean agriculture to shift towards a more integrated and horizontal approach, there is a need for transformational change through renewed policies. Mediterranean agriculture needs to achieve the goals in the context of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. This requires an integrated approach, whereby issues related to food security, employment, income-generation, conservation of biodiversity, and sustainable natural resource use are all addressed in an integrated way also encompassing economic efficiency, environmental sustainability and social equity.

Moreover, Mediterranean agriculture has to become more resilient to shocks and extreme events and to develop adaptation strategies as the adverse impacts of climate change are expected to worsen. As a result, actions geared towards technical and organizational innovations, improved and consolidated knowledge, physical, human and social capital strengthening as well as improved governance and inclusive investments are all important parts of this renewed vision of Mediterranean agriculture and rural development. FAO and CIHEAM, along with other strategic partners, are striving to develop this vision in support of member countries from the region.

### **FAO and CIHEAM: for a strategic partnership**

*FAO does not work in isolation: the value of partnerships*

The entire world is called upon to bring its contribution to overcome the challenge of hunger eradication and poverty reduction. No single organization, individual, nor country can achieve this alone. Responsible citizens have an important role to play by minimizing food waste and consuming environmentally friendly food products. Responsible producers must also do their share by adopting sustainable agricultural practices embedded in a wide range of agricultural models including climate-smart agriculture and agro-ecological systems, to name only a few examples. Investors are called upon to invest in agricultural practices following the framework of the principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems as embraced in 2014 by a very inclusive multi-stakeholder process: the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which FAO has the honor to host.

*Renewed partnership with CIHEAM: strategic plan for 2016*

FAO and CIHEAM need to continue to strengthen their collaboration, which dates back more than 50 years. They share the same objectives of enhancing food and nutrition security through the development of sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, a rational management of natural resources as well as of responsible and equitable food systems and value chains. We have been collaborating through joint knowledge generation, brokering dialogues and developing cooperation projects to strengthen the capacities of different actors in the region at different levels.

Both our organizations feel the need to renew their partnership around a strategic cooperation agenda for a sustainable agriculture in the face of the numerous social, political and economic changes in the region. This lay at the heart of the 2014 Algiers recommendation, adopted on the occasion of the 10th CIHEAM ministerial meeting, when the Ministers requested "that European Union, FAO and CIHEAM examine the idea of defining a common strategic cooperation agenda designed to support agricultural, food and sustainable rural development in the Mediterranean".

Both our organizations share a common vision of agricultural and rural development. Nonetheless, no matter how efficient our actions in the region have been so far, we do need to think out of the box and further build on our complementarities in order to adapt to the changing realities of the region. It is now time for us to be more strategic and pragmatic. We must strive to build consensus, avoid the wasting of resources and consider various options to address the region's most pressing challenges.

And the CIHEAM and the FAO are working on the development of a strategic Action Plan for the Mediterranean on a five years' time horizon as well as the signature of a revised partnership agreement (MOU). This action plan will be articulated around the themes of food and nutritional security, small-scale agriculture and family farming as well as addressing water scarcity in the region. In line with our respective strategic framework, it will be built around three joint areas of work along with concrete joint actions. These topics, which have emerged as key priorities for the region, have given birth to three FAO regional initiatives for MENA and will form the basis of the revised bilateral agreement (MoU) between the CIHEAM and the FAO.

This strategic action plan could be supported by the agricultural ministers of the CIHEAM's 13 Member States on the occasion of their meeting in 2016. Some key partners such as the European Union, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will be invited to join this action.

Joint actions, such as the co-authoring of the 2016 edition of *Mediterra* Report, the joint development of the MEDAGRI network and collaboration on MED-Amin, as well as the joint formulation of a strategic plan for the Mediterranean, are only a few concrete actions of this strategic action plan for the region.

The multi-faceted nature of food and nutrition insecurity in the region and the potential effects in the neighboring regions calls for collaborative efforts, partnership, networking, joint analysis and advocacy among key stakeholders. The strategic FAO-CIHEAM partnership will be based on a renewed vision of the Mediterranean region's needs and prospects. Agricultural and rural areas are at the heart of the stability for future prosperity. Innovation is needed to achieve a new vision for the Mediterranean, one that is more people-centered and aligned with the 2030 agenda and its "agriculture-centered" Sustainable Development Goals.

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