

## **Rio Dialogues “Food and Nutrition” Facilitators’ Report**

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### **Introduction**

The state of global food security and nutrition continues to be alarming. While global food production has kept ahead of overall demand for many years, about one billion people currently do not have access to sufficient calories. A billion more suffer from several mineral and vitamin deficiencies, while a further billion suffer from excess weight and obesity, often leading to various chronic non-communicable diseases; in 2008, 35% of adults were overweight and 12% obese. Furthermore, food-borne diseases, resulting from ingestion of foodstuffs contaminated with microorganisms or chemicals, is a growing health problem.

Food availability, access to food and food utilization are all important components of food security, and which require cross-cutting action from local to global levels. The food security challenge is however further accentuated by the fact that, in many parts of the world, food production is brought about by environmentally unsustainable methodologies (including those that degrade soils, poorly manage water, pollute water courses and create new agricultural land by deforestation, leading to biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission.

This complex situation calls for the involvement of a wide range of actors to develop effective policy and technical interventions that address food and nutritional security.

### **Summary**

The facilitators initiated the process by proposing four main challenges and objectives for a food and nutrition security policy agenda. These included:

- i. Eliminate the under-nutrition rooted in misery and poverty.
- ii. Increase the production and availability of nutritious and safe food.
- iii. Promote healthy food consumption patterns and life styles.
- iv. Promote environmental-friendly practices throughout the food production chain, from food production to consumer.

They then posted four Recommendations that broadly mapped to these challenges to “get the ball rolling”, and which received a large number of mainly supportive comments. They also precipitated the posting of many other Recommendations, some of which were sharply focused while others were more general. Others were more statements or opinions, often supported by lengthy discourses. None were hard to disagree with. Where postings were similar in nature, the Facilitators encouraged merging as appropriate. In all, over 90 “recommendations” were posted, attracting from over 100 to zero endorsements. The Recommendations below are the 10 which received the strongest support in the dialogues process. Short explanatory texts are provided for each.

Over 1000 people engaged in the on-line dialogue, including academics, development NGO members, UN staff, concerned citizens and social activists.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Promote food systems that are sustainable, equitable and contribute to improvement of health.**

Sustainable and diverse diets are needed, higher in fruit and vegetables and lower in animal products. Food distribution systems should be enhanced to ensure that there is adequate availability of healthy food in both urban and rural settings. Health and environment impact assessments of food system adaptation options are essential.

### **2. Eliminate misery and poverty-rooted malnutrition.**

Well designed and implemented multi-sector policies aimed at increasing food availability and accessibility experiences are known. Better food system governance – recognizing the roles of both state and non-state actors – needs to be developed and implemented to help eliminate the world's under-nutrition.

### **3. Promote collaboration between government and the private sector to encourage more equitable and sustainable consumer choices.**

Policy makers need to collaborate more closely with major food processors, retailers and other key actors in the private sector to develop policies that encourage more equitable and sustainable consumer choices to improve public health and address unsustainable demand and consumption.

### **4. Establish programmes to anticipate and prevent food security challenges related to climate change and natural disasters.**

Global warming and related natural disasters will affect food production, transport and storage, and water supply. International programmes must be set in place to anticipate and protect food and water security in specific regions and societies that are particularly vulnerable to weather extremes.

### **5. Environmental protection programs should be effectively integrated into governmental policies for food and nutrition security.**

Environmental-friendly practices are needed throughout the food chain, from production to consumer. Food system policies, technologies and business practices all need to aim for more affordable and better balanced diets based on reduced environmental impacts.

### **6. Closer coordination is needed between the food, energy, water and environmental policy sectors to develop and implement a more coherent global food security agenda.**

More integrated planning and greater cross-system coherence across the global food security agenda is needed, based on closer coordination between the food, energy, water and environmental policy sectors.

**7. Promote alternative crops for tobacco monoculture to enhance health, food security and decent jobs.**

Decisions regarding switching to alternative crops/livelihoods needs to be made simultaneously with strategies for enhancing income support. All actors in the industry need to be at the decision making table on an equal footing with other decision makers to ensure that proposals reflect the aspirations of local farmers and farm workers.

**8. Develop goals and policies (including shifting subsidies) for sustainable, humane food supplies based on good livestock husbandry and natural resource management and including both producers and consumers in the changes.**

The global reliance on animals extends beyond food to revenue, financial security, transport, companionship, social status, cultural identification and their role in helping to balance our ecosystems. However, the rearing and use of animals and the consumption of meat and dairy products have a major impact on the global environment. Ensuring the welfare and responsible use of animals is an effective tool to help achieve sustainable development, deliver poverty alleviation and enhance wellbeing.

**9. Address demographic challenges and plan for demographic change.**

Nations need to implement comprehensive, effective and human-right based demographic policy, e.g. universal access to health care and voluntary family planning, education of youth, the empowerment of women and planning for urbanization. This is cross-cutting issues, not just restricted to food and nutrition security.

**10. Promote engagement of the private sector in policymaking related to sustainable food systems.**

Stronger engagement of the private sector in policy development, e.g. through public-private partnerships, is needed to encourage reducing waste, re-cycling and other actions aimed at delivering more environmentally-sustainable food systems

## **Conclusions**

The most strongly supported Recommendations concerned the need to ensure a better relationship between food and nutritional security and environment goals. Hence, policies and technical interventions aimed at improving food security must include an analysis of synergies and tradeoffs with environment. Enhanced instruments would range from establishing environmental protection programmes to adjusting economic growth to include environmental costs, and closer coordination is needed between the food, energy, water and environmental policy sectors to develop and implement a more coherent global food security agenda.

Another important point is that effective food security and nutrition policy must be seen as a multi-sector action, cross-cutting a wide range of sectors, and interacting with multiple agendas (social security, education, health, food production and distribution, environment, etc.). Policy makers therefore need to work with multiple stakeholders – including those in the private sector – to develop policies that deliver sustainable, equitable and humane food systems.