



# From global food crisis to local food insecurity

**15<sup>th</sup> Brussels Development Briefing**  
**9<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009, CTA and other partners convened the 15<sup>th</sup> 'Brussels Development Briefing' - part of a series of bimonthly Development Briefings on ACP-EU rural development issues. 115 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss the impacts of the global food crisis on ACP countries food security.

## **Partners in the Briefings:**

- CTA
- European Commission
- ACP Group
- IAATSD
- Euforic
- Concord

Introducing the 15<sup>th</sup> Brussels Development Briefing, Philip Mikos from the DG Development at the EC, stressed that the Briefings play a key role in order for participants to familiarize with critical issues for ACP



rural development and to discuss the challenges and opportunities they raise. Turning to the issue of food security, he underlined the timely moment for discussions since a number of major events

- like the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, the FAO World Food Summit - have brought food security back on the development agenda, thus providing the opportunity to sustain the political momentum behind food security. Moreover, the concurrent UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen makes such a meeting particularly timing: climate change hits agriculture particularly hard which increases farmers' vulnerability and food insecurity, therefore its impacts are one of the main challenges we will have to face. M. Mikos then recalled the EU historical involvement and commitment to address food security with a number of instruments: the food security EDF budget line, which in 2007 has been replaced with the Food security thematic program of the DCI, the 2008 1 billion € "Food Facility" aimed at providing a rapid response to the food crisis and the L'Aquila commitment to provide additional 3,8 billions \$ in the next 3 years. Underlining that food security is a complex and multifaceted issue and requires a holistic and strategic approach; he explained that the EC has launched a public consultation to draw from the experiences of larger constituencies in order to produce an EU policy effective and responsive to the issues that currently affect food security. The EC policy initiative is aimed at providing a European framework to address food security but, in his words, those efforts will not be sufficient without a longer term commitment in supporting national governments' implementation capacities. Finally, he called upon ACP states to

renew the Maputo commitment to devote 10% of their GDP in agricultural from 2010.

Hansjörg Neun, director of CTA, remarked that not only the global food crisis but also other issues like biofuels production and climate change are driving prices up, both in developing countries and developed countries, and thus are posing big challenges to food security. Recalling his work experience in Africa, he stressed that food security was and still is a crucial problem: the latest FAO projections estimate 2 billions of undernourished worldwide and, provided that population is expected to increase to 9.2 billions by 2050, this requires a dramatic increase in food production. At the same time, he noted, post-harvest losses are huge, at least in Africa, in some countries, like Ethiopia, food imports are more important than national food security reserves. Against this background, some solutions can be envisaged. Notwithstanding the World Bank 2008 Development Report, which put agriculture back on the scene, and the ACP pledges in Maputo, investments in agriculture are still low because official statistics show that the sector only contribute for 4-6% to GDP. But, in his words, it should be looked at the actual contribution provided by the whole value chain: a Caribbean study show that the agricultural value chain actual contribution to GDP is around 25-30%.

Hans Herren, co-chair of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAATSD) and President of the Millennium Institute, presented some of the outcomes of the IAATSD Reports, emphasizing the issues related to food security.



The Reports represent a multi-stakeholder process aimed at looking at Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development in order to draw a picture of AKST's past, present and future impacts on poverty and hunger, rural livelihoods, nutrition and food security under the new challenges of climate

change, population growth and natural resources' shrinking. In his words, the IAATSD Reports call for a radical change of approach: the Green Revolution is not a way forward not only because it implies an agricultural model based on external inputs which are becoming scarcer and scarcer, but also because people have benefited unevenly from productivity increases and this has come at environmental sustainability and biodiversity costs. Data on total agricultural output across regions clearly show uneven production patterns, with food insecurity problems notably in Africa and Central and West Asia. On this basis, the Reports call for a fundamental shift in AKST and the linked agri-food systems: we basically need an organic revolution, which address the multifunctionality nature of agriculture and the needs of the small-scale farmers, with an emphasis on the social and environmental aspects. Agriculture is a complex issue which is not just about commodities production but also deeply rooted in societies and cultures. According to the Reports, small-scale farming is a major challenge for food security and there is a clear need to create new opportunities and innovation to reach the farmers since they produce the bulk of global food and are the largest stewards for environmental services. M. Herren then presented some of the key options for action contained in the IAATSD Reports as access to land, to economic resources and to new markets and empowerment of farmers through knowledge and innovation. On food security, the Reports call for a better food stock management, local production to ensure food sovereignty and research on underutilized crops. A more equitable access to productive resources, a multi-stakeholders participation in decision making and more investments in education and training are also needed while taking into account climate change impacts, the need for agro-ecological principles and natural resources management, the role of trade and markets and the key role of women in agriculture. In a nutshell: a new thinking on agriculture. Steve Wiggins from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) discussed which lessons should be learnt from the food prices spike and what "future agricultures" appear to be necessary. In his opinion the 2008/2009 food and economic crisis highlight two critical issues: first, the crisis has aggravated the level of undernourishment and malnutrition, notably in the developing world, and led to an increase of food insecure. Then they have revealed new challenges that agriculture will likely need to face and thus should be integrated in the food security agenda. According to him, agriculture will almost certainly need to make four transitions in the next couple of decades: i) From the heavy use of oil and gas for energy and fertiliser to renewable alternatives. This could see, at least in the short and medium terms, real energy prices and the cost of nitrogen fertilizer, currently derived from hydrocarbons, rise substantially. Thus conventional agriculture, heavily dependent in many parts of the world on copious amounts of nitrogen and on power from fossil fuels, could see costs of production increase commensurately; ii) From wasteful use of irrigation water to careful and sparing application of water. Agriculture is the main user of fresh water by

humans, yet much water is wasted. In some of the more densely settled areas of the world water is running short for human and industrial use. The need is for farmers to adopt more careful and sparing use of water; iii) From emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases (GHG) to neutral or even negative net emissions. Agriculture is a major emitter of GHG, reckoned to contribute around



13–14% of the total. If emissions are to be cut, then agriculture will need to reduce its emissions substantially. Nonetheless agriculture has an considerable potential for carbon sequestration and mitigation since there are opportunities in some farming systems to lock carbon into soil and biomass so that net emissions might be zero or even negative; and, not least, iv) From current to altered climates, marked by higher temperatures, more variable weather with more frequent extreme events, altered rainfall patterns; and the concomitants of raised sea levels, reduced and more variable river flows in many river basins, and changed incidence of pests and diseases. Few sectors are likely to be affected more by climate change than agriculture as most projections see overall reduced yields to agriculture, all other things being equal.

What would farming that confronts these challenges look like? According to M. Wiggins, 'future agriculture' shall involve: a more efficient and economical use of some external inputs, above all water and fertilizer, notably through better information technology and pricing; A timely agriculture that responds promptly to (increasingly variable) weather (and again information technology can help); Much reduced emissions through better management of nitrogen fertiliser, manure, reduced stocks of ruminant livestock, low till agriculture, draining of rice paddies, and carbon storage in soil and biomass. Turning to food security and local production, this involves the need for producing in areas where scarcer inputs can be used most economically and where emissions can be minimized and coping with increased variability of harvest owing to more variable weather. Both of these elements, he concluded, potentially imply more trade in food, since drives for self-sufficiency locally or domestically could be highly expensive if not plain destructive.

M. Ndiogou Fall President of ROPPA (West African Farmers Organisation) offered a small scale farmers perspective on the issue, highlighting the role they can play in ensuring food security. In his words food security is a right which is not guaranteed in West Africa since a long time and the recent crisis have aggravated food insecurity in the region. The countries the most dependent on food imports have been the most badly affected. This is the case of Senegal where 65% of cereal needs are covered by imports, because of the easy maritime access. In comparison, Niger, despite its difficult ecological



conditions and perhaps because of its landlocked situation, imports only 15% of its food needs. There is a consensus that food insecurity in West Africa is mainly the result of inadequate or inappropriate policies which do not enable the region to capitalize fully on its agricultural potential, first of all the lack of investment in agriculture. During the food riots, for example, most West African countries adopted some structural measures, including in particular the adoption of production support measures such as input subsidies, but their effectiveness can easily be contested, because it reduces the State's revenues and consequently it doesn't resolve the problem but aggravates it. According to M. Fall agricultural production should be looked at from another perspective since it doesn't concern only food availability but also nutrition security, and an effective productive system with proper safeguards is necessary. Moreover, he pointed out, there are other challenges small scale farmers are facing, which need to be taken into account when we deal with food security. Concerning, for example, climate change, farmers can not be asked to look at the longer term without dealing with their day-by-day situation: acting to stop climate change, he stressed, shouldn't mean stopping development. Then West Africa is facing a demographic explosion which can lead to resources degradation and a net loss for farmers since resources are the very basis of their activity. There is the tendency to accuse small scale farmers of low productivity, he stressed, but we should keep in mind that they ensure environment preservation and a fair distribution of resources. In West Africa agriculture has lot of room for development: it can ensure employment opportunities for a growing population, huge cultivable areas, agricultural diversity and fisheries resources are available. Since, notwithstanding this big potential the region chronically suffers food insecurity, agriculture should be looked at in a different way.

On behalf of Practical Action and CONCORD Food Security Group, M. Stuart Coupe provided the perspective of the civil society on the food crisis and its impacts on food security. In the poorest countries the food insecure are largely micro-scale food producers and livestock rear, who suffer from seasonal hunger every year, long before the 'food crisis' hit news headlines, in a situation of 'permanent' food crisis. From its part Practical Action adopts a community-based approach: they provide formal education opportunities to farmers and create experts in the rural communities in order to create entrepreneurial livelihood for themselves and fill the 'services gap' that exists between formal agriculture and the villages. According to Practical Action experience, very simple actions can solve some of the nutrition problems at the village level: sometimes we look for high-tech solutions while basic and effective solutions are available. They share knowledge-intensive agro-ecological approach of the IAATSD and their intervention is moving in the same direction. At the same time M. Coupe warned that in the transition from an agricultural model to another, a temporary drop in production should be envisaged. Nonetheless a collaborative collective action among different actors

may help to support farmers in the transition period and in the long term the agro-ecological approach will lead to increased productivity. He finally stressed the success of European CAP in addressing regional inequalities with innovative and effective actions both at the national and regional level which we could bring into development policy.

In the debate following panel 1, two main issues were raised: first, the increase of foreign investments in the agricultural sector of developing countries was stressed. Nonetheless it was noted that they often take the form of land acquisitions while it would be more effective to invest in value chains and link small scale farmers up with consumers. Then the issue of 'food carbon footprint' was raised and it was remarked that empirical evidence has shown that a full carbon account of producing in Europe versus producing in an African country like Kenya and then flying products to the European market favor the second option: 'GHG costs' of transport is counterbalanced by the lower emissions associated with Kenyan production.

Panel 2 discussed some policy options to address the food supply and availability at global and local levels. Ms. Giulia Pietrangeli, from the DG Development



presented the Commission's attempt to renew its approach towards agriculture and food security. She recalled the main policy lines behind the new policy paper: building broad-based strategies at national, regional and global level; linking short term emergency interventions and long term development assistance; as well as addressing the four food security pillars (availability, access, food quality and utilisation and crisis management and prevention). She briefly recalled the existing instruments to address food security and explained the rationale for a new EU policy on food security. In emphasising the need for a more comprehensive and coordinated response to food security, she enumerated several reasons behind the new policy on food security, notably the new global agenda for food security and agriculture, the review of MDGs and the growing challenges rose by climate change. Other key motivations include the lack of a food security policy framework at EU level, the 2009 Council's conclusions supporting developing countries in coping with the crisis, the need to address new issues like biofuels and the need to increase the effectiveness of EU food assistance on the field. The overall objective of the new EU policy is to contribute to MDG1 and increasing food security in developing countries. This will be addressed along the four pillars and at the global, EU and recipient levels in order to ensure that valuable strategies are in place and that all instruments are used effectively. Bridging the gap between short-term emergency interventions and long-term measures represents another key intervention area to be taken into account. Ms. Pietrangeli stressed out that in-country coordination, synergies, complementarities and division of labour, coherence of different European policies and synergies between existing financial instruments are among the main



implementation issues and she invited the interested stakeholders to provide their views and commentaries. David Nabarro, UN's Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition gave an overview of the current realities and remarked that if one third of the world's population is poor today is because food systems



have not been working for many decades. Furthermore, the economic slump has worsened the situation, especially in those countries dependent on the market, and further contributed to the increasing number of undernourished people. Recognising that many drivers have contributed to the high prices between 2006 and 2008 and further on, Mr Nabarro emphasized that the key problem is not the global amount of food available, but its access to and utilization. This requires comprehensive policy approaches and ensuring that all people can exercise their right to food and access the food they need. All nations' sustainable food sovereignty should also be part of the policy response to food insecurity. While sharing the Commission's four pillars approach (availability, access, utilisation and stability), he stressed the need for a collective response, taking stock of the short and long-term needs and working together with stakeholders and national authorities. In response to the food insecurity situation the UN developed a Comprehensive Framework for Action which sets out short and long term objectives and aims to deliver not only immediate but also long-term outcomes. Turning to governance, he remarked the need to listen and respond to family farmers' needs. Looking at the way forward, in his belief National Food Security strategies and plans could lead, to developing multi-stakeholders comprehensive approaches, such as some of the already existing ones: CAADP, UN System High level Task Force, Global Partnership on Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition etc. but he called for further coordination among these initiatives in the coming months, supporting the idea that developing countries, as far as possible, should be in the lead. Promoting concerted actions that respond to the needs of poor people and bridging the gap between short and longer term responses, humanitarian and development assistance should also be part of the solution.

Moderated by H.E. Ambassador Gomes, the discussions raised the issue of newer EU member states support to development, whose commitments for food security are already in place according to the EC representative. Reinforcing local and regional infrastructure in order to guarantee local trade and better market access was also stressed. Furthermore, it was noted that coproduction of sustainable biofuels and food is significantly important for the critical role that energy plays in development. HE Ambassador of Eritrea, brings into attention "cash for work" as part of the solution to food insecurity which can incorporate the whole infrastructures asset. Concerning global governance in food security, the need for better coherence and the option to move towards a coordinating body was raised. In response, the UN

representative explained that the issue of global governance in food security is extremely complex since the primary responsibility of state in some areas such as infrastructure, social protection and healthcare. Moreover a number of important actors are not part of the existing multilateral governance structures. At the G20 in Pittsburg, donors have asked the WB to move funds to countries and establish a mechanism which will work within the UN system. Avoiding multiplicity of financing mechanisms as to avoid more difficulties for the recipient countries is also part of the project. The need for an increased participation of smallholder farmer's organizations in the policy-making process was reckoned, along with the need to provide them with the appropriate tools. The fundamental role of private sector in responding to food insecurity was also raised. As a response, the UN representative underscored that under the UN Committee on Food Security, a forum will be organized in order for the civil society (including smallholder farmer organizations) to provide input in the policy making process and implementation. He further emphasized that for the UN system the engagement of the national private sector in policy discussions and implementation is critical, whether it is about large companies, farmer's organizations or research groups. In order to strengthen the capacities of farmers investments have lacked until now and changing the situation is imposing. The World Bank representative explained that on food security the Bank is taking action at several levels such as creating the connection between agri-food standards, food security and the issue of foodborne diseases. He remarked the high interest of the private sector to respond to the food insecurity situation and the role of the WB in bridging these two aspects and addressing post harvest loss reduction – an area that needs more energetic response from the international community. The key role of women in agriculture and the need to ensure access to credit and to land for women was also mentioned. Dr. Herren underlined the need of serious investment in agriculture from the public sector's side too: access to food is a human right and investment can't be entirely left in the hands of the private sector. The lack of commitment to food security was also raised. Problems on the field are threefold: policies not adapted to realities, the financing (too expensive loans for farmers) and capacity building and the lack of credibility for farmer's organizations. The need for more research in agriculture was finally raised, with Dr Herren warning that research in developing countries should respond to current realities and take into account ecological aspects.

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