

THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME AND GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

UK Food Group submission to the International Development Committee

Summary

- This submission focuses not so much on the World Food Programme, *per se*, but on the need for improved cooperation, refocusing of goals and reorganisation of tasks between UN and other international agencies concerned with the governance of the global food system, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation. It also comments on the idea of a “one UN” approach to securing future food supplies, at a time of not only a food crisis, but also institutional crises in the agencies.
- It provides an historical overview through a selected overview of the, still relevant, outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference and a review of the current context that mentions the impacts of increased concentration of economic power in the food system; trade rules; climate change; food and health; water and waste; and agrofuels.
- It argues that a new approach to secure future food supplies is needed, one that is based on local control of food systems, securing locally-procured and accessible grain stores and building on the knowledge of the world’s main food providers – small-scale producers – that defends their production systems, which work with nature. The multilateral agencies will need to work more effectively together and with States and meso-level institutions to implement such approaches.
- Finally, this submission proposes a number of actions that the IDC could take including proposing a meta-evaluation of the key global food agencies, subsequent consultation at national and regional levels on the results of such an evaluation and the formulation in a global meeting of proposals for an inclusive body, comprising both State and Civil Society actors, that could provide oversight, coherence and accountability of the different agencies.
- It also suggests that the IDC may wish to follow carefully the processes on Aid Effectiveness and the review of DFID’s 2005 agriculture policy that need to consider institutional coherence and cooperation.

The UK Food Group

The UK Food Group is the principal civil society network in the UK on global food and farming issues and is the UK focal point for many European and International networks. It represents BOND (British Overseas NGOs in Development) on these issues. Members of the UK Food Group include both large and smaller NGOs that work on development and environment issues related to food and farming, as well as farmer-centred NGOs. The UK Food Group organises the annual World Food Day event on 16 October in the UK. The secretariat is located in Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming.

Submission

1. The UK Food Group welcomes the interest of the IDC in these vitally important issues at a time of heightened concern about future food availability, price, quality and control. In a warming world, securing supplies of sufficient, healthy and affordable food is a major challenge for all.
2. Some of our members have specific experiences of work with the World Food Programme (WFP), and Oxfam, for example, has submitted evidence on these to the IDC. This submission will complement this and principally focuses on the opportunities in the UN system and other global food agencies, more widely than the WFP *per se*, for changes in normative and programme activities that could help address future food challenges, as highlighted among the issues to be covered by this enquiry:
 - *Cooperation between the WFP and other UN Agencies, for example the Food and Agriculture Organisation*
 - *The prospects for a “one UN” approach in meeting food security needs.*

3. It seems clear that the current individual institutional approaches to addressing global food problems are not effective – a new approach is needed. Recent critical evaluations of the five most important food and agricultural agencies which have a combined annual budget of around \$7 billion (FAO, IFAD, World Food Program, CGIAR, and the World Bank's agricultural work) are challenging the governance and budgets of each institution. Major financial and institutional changes may be decided this year (ETC Group, 2008). The IDC enquiry is timely, in this respect.
4. The conjuncture of current food and energy price rises (FAO, 2007) are, to some extent, similar to those experienced in 1972/3 which resulted, *inter alia*, in the 1974 World Food Conference and subsequent changes in the global governance of the world's food system to realise goals that sadly were not realised. A brief overview of the outcomes of this Conference may help in understanding what is still needed to address the problem of securing world food supplies. By presenting these points it may also provide an indication of the systemic problems in a world food system that has perhaps been subordinated to realising other goals, such as economic growth facilitated by inequitable trade systems, with consequent negative impacts on food, farmers and other food providers and the environment.

1974 World Food Conference

5. The World Food Conference proposed the '**elimination of hunger**' and, recognising the then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's pledge that "within a decade, no child should go hungry to bed" adopted a Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition which commences: "Every man, woman and child has the **inalienable right to be free from hunger** and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties".
6. It declared that "It is a responsibility of each State concerned, in accordance with its sovereign judgement and internal legislation, **to remove the obstacles to food production and to provide proper incentives to agricultural producers...**" including "... the mobilization of the full potential human resources, both male and female, in the developing countries, for an integrated rural development and the **involvement of small farmers, fishermen and landless workers in attaining the required food production and employment targets.**"
7. The Declaration also proposed that the "effort to increase food production should be complemented by **every endeavour to prevent wastage of food in all its forms.**"
8. Further it said: "All States should strive to the utmost to readjust, where appropriate, their agricultural policies **to give priority to food production**, recognizing, in this connexion, the interrelation between the world food problem and the international trade."
9. Mindful of the need for sustained production of food, the Declaration also highlighted the need to conserve the environment upon which all food production from land and waters depends. "To assure the **proper conservation of natural resources being utilized, or which might be utilized, for food production**, all countries must collaborate in order to facilitate the preservation of the environment, including the marine environment. (Emphases added) (United Nations, 1974)
10. The 20 resolutions of the 1974 Conference included recommendations for the development of the UN's Rome-based food and agriculture agencies, namely the reconstitution of WFP's governing body as well as the establishment of the World Food Council (WFC), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

11. This Conference led, in turn, to an International Undertaking on World Food Security, adopted by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), and other proposed international instruments and systems, some of which, such as the Global Information and Early Warning System [on food supplies] managed by FAO, are still operational. For more detail, see the recent book by John Shaw on the history of world food security since 1945 (Shaw, 2007).
12. The 1996 World Food Summit and the subsequent reviews in 2002 and 2006 made similar pledges, absorbed into the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1), but this time only to **reduce** hunger, not eliminate it, and with lighter or absent commitments to other necessary pre-conditions identified by the 1974 World Food Conference for a world free from hunger. Hunger continues, seemingly inexorably, to increase – now at over 850 million people (FAO, 2006).

Current Context

13. The current context differs in some substantial respects from that of 1974, not least increased population and changing demographics. In a recent study, the need for sustainable management of the global resource base emerged as an issue of fundamental importance, with constraints on the supply of oil, water and land demanding particular attention (Chatham House, 2008). To this list of resource constraints we would add the rapid erosion on-farm of agricultural biodiversity and its component genetic resources for food and agriculture from which all food is produced.
14. In addition, we raise five points that currently have significant impact on the global food system, affecting price, quality, livelihoods and the environment: a) Increased concentration of economic power in the food system supported by intellectual property rights systems and trade rules; b) Climate change; c) Food and health; d) Water and Waste; e) Conversion of food production resources to produce agrofuels.
15. Economic and political control of the food chain has increased dramatically in the past 30 years. A few companies now dominate any food commodity marketing chain and food retailing is increasingly concentrated in most countries (UK Food Group, 2003). In the current decade alone the ten largest agricultural seed corporations have increased their control over the global seed market from some 30% in the year 2002 to nearly 60% in 2006 (Mulvany, 2005; ETC group, 2007).
16. This control is to some extent facilitated by trade rules, especially those of the World Trade Organisation including its Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and the agreement on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), among others. Intellectual Property Rights systems have skewed agricultural research towards patentable processes and the restricted use of protected agricultural genetic resources (Tansey and Rajotte, 2008). Furthermore, bilateral and regional trade agreements, such as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), can discriminate against the interests of local food producers, national food systems and environmental integrity (Bertow and Schultheis, 2007).
17. Climate change is now accepted as a reality and all necessary steps to mitigate and adapt to it must be undertaken in order to limit the impact of global warming and, in this context, to safeguard food production. More than three quarters of the Earth's land surface has been reshaped by human activity. Agriculture, in the widest sense, is the major user of terrestrial ecosystems and, through the use of sustainable agricultural practices, could enhance ecosystem functions. However, especially through the production and use of artificial nitrogenous fertilisers, agriculture is identified as a major contributor of Green House Gases (GHGs) and opportunities to modify the agricultural environment to stabilise, and not worsen, the global climate need to be maximised (IPPC, 2007).

18. The health dimensions of the food system are being brought into sharp focus. Not only is there increasing hunger, there is also a pandemic of type II diabetes in many developing countries resulting from rapidly increasing over consumption of rich diets – the so-called ‘nutrition transition’. Some estimates put the number of obese people at twice that of the chronically malnourished. It is not a matter of quantity, *per se*, but also of quality of food that is required for a healthy food system. There is a need to break down the barriers in thinking between nutrition and environment, safety and plentiful supply, quantity and quality... about a diet and food system which meets all these goals and does not mine resources to give plentiful supply today to the detriment of tomorrow (Lang, 2007).
19. The negative impacts of inequitable controls over water supplies are exacerbated by the trend towards privatisation and resultant skewing of allocation away from those most in need. Much water is incorporated in food, especially fruit and vegetables, that is increasingly being thrown away, with estimates in the UK of some 30% wastage (Arce, 2008).
20. The diversion of productive land and food crops to the production of agrofuels, especially for transport, is increasing and is given incentives in some countries, including the European Union, through mandatory ‘biofuel targets’, leading to food price pressures.

A New Approach to Secure Future Food Supplies

21. Many of the recommendations of the 1974 World Food Conference are still valid, especially in respect of a) the inalienable right to be free from hunger; b) agricultural policies to give priority to food production with the proper conservation of natural resources being utilized, or which might be utilized, for food production; c) the removal of the obstacles to food production and the provision of proper incentives to agricultural producers; d) the involvement of small farmers, fishermen and landless workers in attaining the required food production and employment targets; and e) the prevention wastage of food in all its forms. However the institutional architecture proposed and subsequent global governance systems implemented were inadequate to realise these goals.
22. A new approach to securing future food supplies is needed, supported by radically changed national, regional and international norms, rules, policies, practices and governance structures.
23. This new approach to solving the food crisis can be found from the deliberations of the world’s main food providers – small-scale food producers – who argue that the necessary knowledge and skills are available to produce food in sufficient quantities to feed everyone and especially the hungry but it is institutional, policy and regulatory frameworks that discriminate against such solutions. For example, African smallholder farmers’ organisations often assert that Africa could feed itself if national and global policies changed to support them rather than be dictated by export-led growth policies fuelled by perverse subsidies (Nærstad, 2007; ROPPA, 2006).
24. This proposition of small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and others is for a radically different food system based on food sovereignty. It is becoming more widely accepted, including by some States, e.g. Bolivia (WFP, 2008). Food sovereignty includes the legal Right to Food and to produce food and increases democracy in localised food systems, which maximise the efficiency of resource use and minimise waste. Food Sovereignty addresses all the key issues raised by the 1974 World Food Conference. It focuses on food for people; values food providers; localises food systems; puts control locally including over land, water and genetic resources; builds local knowledge and skills; and works with nature. Food sovereignty is substantially different from policies for achieving world ‘food security’, which can be exclusionary and are silent on where the food comes from, who produces it, or how and under what conditions it has been grown (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005; Nyéléni 2007, 2007a, 2007b).

25. Such approaches can also address problems related to climate change. The adaptive capacity and mitigation impacts of multi-functional, biodiverse, small-scale food production systems are highlighted by small-scale farmers themselves. (Via Campesina, 2007).
26. The importance of science and technology for developing the multifunctionality of agriculture in improving the environment and sustaining long-term food production is recognised in a recent international assessment (IAASTD, 2007). A redirection of research and development towards ecologically-based biodiverse agriculture could be prioritised, but global intellectual property rules undermine this (Tansey and Rajotte, 2008).
27. The need to enhance diversity and maximise ecosystem functions in farmer-led food production systems is also recognised by UN bodies including FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). At a recent meeting, FAO called for such a 'biological intensification' of agriculture rather one that is 'chemically-dependent' (Shand, 1997; Mulvany and Arce, 2008).
28. Notwithstanding the above, there is still the need for publicly-controlled strategic national and regional stores of locally-sourced basic grains that can be drawn upon in emergency when local food stores are insufficient, inaccessible or lost. In addition to providing strategic food supplies in emergencies, they can act as a buffer against speculative attempts to control the market for short-term gains. This important service should not be left to a 'free' market nor be privatised. In this regard, the WFP, regulated by an effective, revised, FAO-based Food Aid Convention, could have an important role (IFPRI, 2007).

Implications for the UN's Rome-based Food Agencies – recommendations to the IDC

29. There is clearly a need for radical change in the global governance of the food system towards one that is environmentally benign and socially just and recognises the value of local food providers, enhancing their links with consumers – a system that improves local control over what, and how, food is produced, stored and provided, realising the Right to Food. The institutional failures that prevented the implementation of the 1974 World Food Conference's recommendations cannot be repeated.
30. To achieve the necessary changes, the multilateral agencies, while retaining their independent processes, functions and mandates, will need to work together more effectively and in a coordinated fashion with States, that have legal powers and obligations (e.g. to realise the Right to Food), and meso-level institutions, that are key to effective actions on the ground, to implement such approaches that will ensure sufficient food supplies in the short and long-term.
31. The Rome-based UN agencies – FAO, WFP and IFAD – could provide this function but only if there were a reorganisation of their tasks, a strengthening of their normative and monitoring capacities and with synergistic support from other agencies such as the World Bank and the CGIAR. One way forward could be the creation of a new 'oversight body' that includes State and Civil Society actors, including the social organisations of food providers and consumers. Such a body should draw on best practices for meaningful and decisive inclusion of Civil Society in its deliberations.
32. The IDC might wish to consider recommending that Governments and the Secretariats of the food agencies undertake a relatively rapid 'meta-evaluation' of all of the global food and agricultural agencies together, building on their recent individual evaluations and assessing their effectiveness in addressing hunger and their long-term impact on policies for a fairer and more equitable, effective, healthier and environmentally benign global food system.

33. The results of this meta-evaluation would need to be discussed widely in regional consultations and the results brought together in global meeting. The process for this consultation could be mandated to, for example, the FAO that has the regional structures within which this could be achieved.
34. One possible outcome of the global meeting might be the creation of an 'oversight body' for the UN and other food agencies and those with policies and programmes that impact on the food system, with powers to implement changes. This could oversee: a) the reorganisation of departments between agencies, improving their capacity to support sustainable small-scale production, local storage and provision; b) an increase in their accountability; c) a reduction in duplication; and d) coherent governance to achieve the elimination of hunger and a secure, healthy, environmentally benign and socially just global food system, through the normative functions of each agency. The creation of such an 'oversight body', with appropriate powers, might prove the most effective form for a 'one UN' approach. It would not replace existing agencies but would provide a mechanism for improving performance.
35. The IDC may also want to provide input to and study the results of the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra in September 2008, at which there will be debates about the quality of aid to agriculture. In this regard, the IDC may wish to learn from the civil society campaign for More and Better aid to agriculture that has developed principles for good agricultural aid. To support these principles and practices, the campaign argues that aid to agriculture should:
- facilitate provision of sufficient, safe, nutritious food;
 - put emphasis on income strategies, peoples' livelihoods, local production systems, local markets, fair trade, fair and good distribution systems, protection of markets where needed to enhance national and local food security, and avoid the use of food aid where it will threatened the market for local products
 - support realization of land reform, water rights and unrestricted access to genetic resources for food and agriculture and wider agricultural biodiversity for smallholder farmers; exclusive fishing zones for artisanal fisherfolk; grazing rights for pastoralists; improved common property resource management;
 - support sustainable, farmer-led, smallholder / family / community agricultural systems (e.g. agroecology, sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture)
- (More and Better, 2005).
36. Finally, in this context, the IDC may wish to contribute to and monitor the review of DFID's 2005 agriculture policy, ensuring that the outcome of this review enhances DFID's capacity to address the current food crisis, to support locally-controlled food provision as described above and address the governance and other issues the IDC has highlighted in this enquiry.

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