

The Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition: A Right to Food Perspective

Introduction

The vision of the reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is to strive towards "... a world free from hunger where countries implement the voluntary guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security".¹

As an important tool to achieve this vision, the Global Strategic Framework (GSF) will offer a set of guidelines for States, intergovernmental actors, the corporate private sector, and the CFS itself, on how to promote policy coherence within the rights based framework, towards the full realization of the right to adequate food.

The objective of this fact sheet is to outline the central role of the right to food within the CFS reform and to formulate suggestions about how the right to adequate food can be integrated into the goal, process and outcome of the GSF.

1. The reform of the Committee on World Food Security and the process towards the Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition

The reform of the CFS emerged after the food prices crises in 2007 and 2008. It reflects the common understanding that a renewed and improved governance system on food security and nutrition was needed to effectively address the causes of the unacceptable situation of structural poverty and hunger around the world. Today, close to one billion people, one in every seven human beings, are suffering from undernourishment. A very large proportion of these are small scale food producers and the majority of them are women. At the same time, almost the same number of people are considered obese.

The reform of the CFS set a new course for the Committee to become the foremost inclusive forum for the global governance of food security and nutrition through the promotion of international coordination and coherence with the aim to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, particularly, by strengthening the implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines.²

¹ CFS, Reform of the Committee on World Food Security, Final Version, Thirty-fifth session of the CFS, 14,15 and 17th October 2009, Agenda Item III, CFS: 2009/2 Rev 2.

² FAO, Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the 127th session of the Council of FAO in November 2004, herein referenced as "Right to Food Guidelines" (http://www.fao.org/righttofood/publi_01_en.htm).

An important result of the reform of the CFS has been the increased level of participation of a range of civil society actors, including representatives from those constituencies most affected by hunger and malnutrition, such as the landless, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists, women, youth and the urban poor. These and other civil society organizations (CSOs) interact with the CFS through the autonomous Civil Society Mechanism (CSM).

One of the major challenges of the CFS is the elaboration, as an overarching guiding framework, of the **Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)**.³ The GSF is meant to be a dynamic living instrument to enhance the CFS as a coordination and guidance platform of global, regional and country-led food security and nutrition actions. Rather than being legally binding, the GSF will constitute a commitment for country members to adopt its principles, options and policy base as suited to their local needs and circumstances.⁴

The GSF is intended to add value to the development process by providing a single reference to core priorities for food security and nutrition, drawing on existing frameworks and the decisions taken by governments in the context of the CFS and, importantly, by securing multi-stakeholder consensus across the full spectrum of CFS stakeholders.⁵

The principal users of the GSF are expected to be national decision and policy makers responsible for the development and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving

food security and nutrition, and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. The GSF will also be an important tool for decision and policy makers in donor countries and development agencies responsible for development cooperation programmes. This would include those people responsible for other policy areas with a direct or indirect impact on food security and nutrition in developing countries.⁶

The GSF offers guidelines and recommendations for coherent actions at the global, regional and country levels, while emphasizing the central role of country ownership and highlighting key differences in policy and practice that should be included in the CFS agenda for future debate, consensus building and convergence.

"States should assess, in consultation with key stakeholders, the economic and social situation, including the degree of food insecurity and its causes, the nutrition situation and food safety".

(Right to Food Guideline 2.2)

2. The Right to Food Framework

As a practical instrument, the GSF will draw on existing frameworks, particularly on the Right to Food Guidelines, to ensure that the development of policies, actions and programmes is conducive to the implementation of the right to food. The right to adequate food has been recognized as a human right in several international declarations and treaties, such as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the International

3 CFS, Reform of the Committee on World Food Security, Final Version, Thirty-fifth session of the CFS, 14,15 and 17th October 2009, Agenda Item III, CFS: 2009/2 Rev 2.

4 CFS, Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, Agreement on purpose, basic principles, structure and process, Thirty-seventh session of the CFS, 17- 22nd October 2011, Item VI, CFS/2011/Inf. 14.

5 CFS, Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, First Draft, 27-02-2012, paragraph 3.

6 *Ibidem*, paragraph 4.

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defined in its General Comment 12 (GC12) that “the right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”⁷

The right to adequate food has different dimensions, such as availability, accessibility, adequacy, cultural acceptability and sustainability. Availability refers to the possibility, either to feed oneself directly from productive land and other natural resources, or to benefit from well functioning distribution systems that can move food from the production site to where people need it. Accessibility encompasses both economic and physical dimensions. Economic accessibility implies that the cost of adequate food should be affordable and should not threaten or compromise other basic needs. Physical accessibility implies that adequate food must be accessible to everyone, including physically vulnerable individuals, people living in disaster prone areas and other disadvantaged groups.⁸ Food that people consume must be adequate, not only sufficient in quantity, but also in quality, correspond to their culture and be accessible for both present and future generations.

As all human rights, the right to adequate food also bears States’ obligations to *respect, protect* and *fulfill* the right to adequate food. This means that State Parties to the ICESCR must *respect* existing access to adequate food by not taking any measures that result in preventing it, and must *protect* the right of everyone to adequate food by ensuring that enterprises and individuals do not deprive individuals of this right. Under the

fulfillment bound obligations, State Parties must facilitate the access to resources or income to enable individuals and groups to feed themselves by their own means, or to provide adequate food for those who are not capable of feeding themselves for reasons beyond their control, through the distribution of food and the implementation of social protection programmes.⁹

The Right to Food Guidelines, adopted by the FAO Council in 2004, are considered an outstanding international consensus document on the implementation of the right to adequate food, in the context of food security and nutrition policies. The Guidelines provide practical guidance to States in developing national strategy, policies, programmes and activities, taking into account human rights principles, such as equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and rule of law, and the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent.¹⁰ The Guidelines, and the experiences with their implementation thus far, offer a series of substantial elements for a human rights based GSF.

In developing strategies, States should start with “...a careful assessment of existing national legislation, policy and administrative measures, current programmes, systematic identification of existing constraints and availability of existing resources”.

(Right to Food Guideline 3.2)

⁷ Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment Nr. 12 on the right to adequate food, E/C.12/1999/5, (paragraph 8).

⁸ *Ibidem*, paragraphs 9-13.

⁹ *Ibidem*, (paragraph 15).

¹⁰ FAO, Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted at the 127th session of the FAO Council in November 2004 (http://www.fao.org/righttofood/publi_01_en.htm).

3. Recommendations: Integrating the Right to Food into the GSF

Given the established human rights standards and the specific importance given by the reformed CFS to the implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines, it is suggested that the right to food should be integrated into the goal, process and outcome dimensions of the GSF in the following way:

- **GOAL.** The full enjoyment of the human right to adequate food by all should be seen as the ultimate goal of the GSF. This means that human rights standards and the right to adequate food should be prioritized within the GSF in all dimensions, taking the right to food as the basis for assessment, action and accountability. Such an approach ensures coherence of the GSF with the CFS vision statement and allows countries and other actors to move together in the same direction.
- **PROCESS.** Fundamental human rights principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law (PANTHER) and standards should be included and mainstreamed in all policy, strategy and

programme recommendations of the GSF. Integrating these principles into all policies related to food security and nutrition improves and ensures effectiveness and efficiency of the measures taken to fight against hunger and its root causes.

- **OUTCOME.** Empowerment of right holders and accountability of duty bearers should be strengthened through the policy measures recommended by the GSF. The GSF should provide guidance on mechanisms that empower people to claim their right to adequate food and to hold States and other stakeholders accountable for establishing and implementing policies that are consistent with their obligations under human rights law to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate food.¹¹ The sustainability of efforts to eradicate hunger can only be achieved when those at risk are empowered and have access, at any time, to accountability instruments that effectively promote and protect their human right to adequate food.

¹¹ See also: Golay, Christophe and Büschi, Michaela, *Possible ways to integrate the right to adequate food into global frameworks for food security and nutrition, with a focus on the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) and the UN Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)*, FAO Study, advance draft, March 2012.



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