



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

The parliamentary sector as a key stakeholder
in building a new normal



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FOREWORD

Evidence shows that when strong political will is translated into laws, public policies and programmes, food security and nutrition indicators tend to improve significantly. The parliamentary sector acts as a key stakeholder in promoting and passing laws and policies to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, but above all to ensure food and nutrition security. Despite the challenging times posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, parliamentarians have reiterated their commitment to learn and share their experiences, strengthening collaborative ties between countries and regions, thus providing continuity and stimulus to the processes of adopting laws, policies and programmes, and the allocation and oversight of public budgets.

The parliamentary sector also plays a key role in implementing the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF). This framework serves as a reference for developing public policies and investments to promote family farming from a holistic perspective, thus seeking to drive the transformative potential of family farmers to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues have provided a global showcase for various legislative outcomes and initiatives that help reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security (FNS). This clearly demonstrates how virtuous and timely parliamentary action can be and how necessary it is to develop legal frameworks, exercise political oversight and ensure budgetary allocations that pave the way for faster and more lasting recovery.

All crises bring opportunities. FAO recognizes the profound difficulties created by the pandemic and we stand ready to seize new opportunities. As time goes on, measures and capacities that help us to better manage the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition are emerging with greater force. It is encouraging to see the commitment and innovative thinking that parliamentarians have demonstrated, acting as true changemakers and playing a key role in building a new normal.



Marcela Villarreal, Ph.D.

Director of the FAO Partnerships and United Nations Collaboration Division
FAO



PREFACE

In recent years, several factors have caused the world to veer from its path towards ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030. The difficulties have increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social, economic and health challenges it poses are unprecedented. Coronavirus disease has set back progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrined in the 2030 Agenda, undermining decades of global development efforts, according to a new report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021c).

It is estimated that between 702 and 828 million people suffered from chronic hunger² in 2021 (FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF, 2022). In 2021, hunger affected 46 million more people than in 2020 and a total of 150 million more people than in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Records also show that some 2.3 billion people lacked access to adequate food in 2021. No region of the world has been spared from this situation. As a result of the high cost of healthy diets and persistently high levels of poverty and income inequality, healthy diets remained unaffordable for an estimated 3.1 billion people in all regions of the world.¹ In parallel, the gender gap in the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity has widened further in the years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above scenario makes it increasingly clear that achieving the 2030 Agenda targets requires urgent and fundamental changes, which lead food systems towards more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable models, while coordinated, multidimensional and comprehensive responses are required to avoid a historic setback in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

In this context, parliamentary alliances have been able to play a key, strategic role in addressing the problems and challenges that accentuate food insecurity and malnutrition. The parliamentary sector has taken on a crucial role as changemaker in promoting and developing food and nutrition security (FNS) measures. This role becomes even more important in the time of COVID-19. Parliamentarians are important because they are able to develop legislation within national and regional policy frameworks, to approve public budget allocations, as well as to ensure government accountability and oversight during the implementation of political commitments, taking into account the specific contexts and needs of their societies.

FAO therefore continues to directly support more than 45 national, regional and subregional parliamentary networks around the world. As a result of these ties, more than 35 laws have been drafted and supported, including laws on: family farming, responsible investment in agriculture, gender equality and women's empowerment, school feeding programmes, food labelling, and food loss and waste, among others.

In the same vein, the FAO Conference in June 2021 approved the new Strategic Framework 2022–2031, which will drive the Organization's efforts to transform agrifood systems and thereby

¹ Hunger is an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It becomes chronic when a given person does not consume a sufficient amount of calories (dietary energy) on a regular basis to lead a normal, active and healthy life. (FAO, 2022).

² Moderate or severe food insecurity is an estimate of the percentage of a country's population that faces difficulties in accessing enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life (FAO, 2022).

reduce hunger, poverty and inequality over the next decade. FAO's new approach recognizes the importance of working with parliamentary alliances and networks. The Organization is committed to this path given the results and success stories that this collaboration has produced at country level, which is why FAO has decided to strengthen and broaden its scope (FAO. 2021a).

FAO therefore reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting national and regional parliaments in their efforts to promote food security and nutrition by fostering national legislation, access to knowledge and information, and fora for the exchange of experiences and good practices. The latter provided fertile ground for the Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues on Food Security and Nutrition in the time of COVID-19³, which are the subject of this report.

³ Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues: Food Security and Nutrition in the time of COVID-19 (available at: <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/virtual-parliamentary-dialogues/es/>)

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This publication was prepared under the leadership of Marcela Villareal, Director of the Partnerships and United Nations Collaboration Division (PSU). It was also coordinated and technically supervised by Guilherme Brady, Head of the FAO Family Farming and Parliamentary Networks Unit, and Jean Leonard Touadi, Special Coordinator of the FAO Parliamentary Networks Team.

The text was drafted by Mr Alvaro Espinoza, FAO Specialist Consultant on Partnerships with Parliamentary Networks, based on the Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues: Food security and nutrition in the time of COVID-19, which were carried out between March and September 2021. The reports were drawn up with the technical support of the FAO Right to Food Team.

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We hope that the technical input provided by the following publication may be useful for further action in this regard.



Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition
www.parliamentarysummit.org

Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition
FAO WFP UNICEF

INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of crisis, parliamentarians have played a key role in promoting emergency legislation and discussing international loans and national funds aimed at COVID-19 recovery, while also overseeing the measures taken by governments. The parliamentary sector is also essential for raising the profile of issues in public opinion and mobilizing multi-stakeholder partnerships at national, regional and international levels.

Following the successful first Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition (Madrid Summit), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), organized a series of Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Parliamentary Dialogues carved out a political space for discussing specific parliamentary initiatives and appropriate legal frameworks to ensure an enabling environment for food security and nutrition. These events also provided an opportunity to update parliamentary communities from different regions of the world on successful experiences and lessons learned in mitigating and building capacity to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition.

The human rights-based approach adopted by various countries to ensure the right to adequate food, provides successful mechanisms for strengthening governance in terms of participation, inclusion and improving the quality and relevance of information for decision-making. In order to achieve this aim, it is essential that the capacities and commitment of the various stakeholders, including parliamentarians, who are directly involved in reaching agreements to approve budgets and to develop the necessary legislative changes, be mobilized.

The pandemic has showcased the importance of coordinated legislation to ensure access to adequate food. Through their legislative, budgetary and oversight roles, parliamentarians can play a crucial role as agents of change in addressing and mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 during the containment and recovery phases, safeguarding employment and local economies, and ensuring economic inclusion and the right to food for all.



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VIRTUAL PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUES: FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



Columbia Sportswear Company

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN⁴

THE REGION'S EXPERIENCE

Despite previous achievements in Latin America and the Caribbean in eradicating hunger⁵ and malnutrition in all its forms, both continue to increase. Although the Nations have adopted important social protection measures, many of them aimed at combating food insecurity, there has been a sharp increase in hunger, exacerbated by COVID-19.

During the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, parliaments in the region have shown proactive and responsible leadership. This has led to the monitoring, evaluation and discussion of emergency legislation, and the approval of national funds to mitigate the effects of the disease. The legislative, budgetary and oversight functions enjoyed by parliamentarians allow them to promote mechanisms to combat and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, as well as to lead and foster processes of transformation towards a fairer and more sustainable food system.

The Parliamentary Dialogues for Latin America and the Caribbean facilitated the exchange of experiences and parliamentary capacity building for 16 national parliamentary representations and 2 subregional bodies.⁶

⁴ The Parliamentary Dialogues for Latin America and the Caribbean were held in a double session on 3 March and 31 May 2021.

⁵ The LAC region is the only region in the world that has achieved both the hunger reduction goals of the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals.

⁶ The Parliamentary Dialogues were attended by representatives of: Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile,



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN / FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ In 2021, hunger affected 56.5 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).
- ▶ At regional level, the prevalence of undernourishment (SDG indicator 2.1.1) affected 8.6 percent of the population in 2021.
- ▶ Between 2019 and 2020, the cost of a healthy diet increased by 3.4 percent in LAC.
- ▶ In LAC 131.3 million people could not afford a healthy diet by 2020, 8 million more than in 2019.
- ▶ In LAC, women, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, and people living in rural areas are more likely to experience food insecurity.
- ▶ Even before the pandemic, the region was not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger.

Source: FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2022. / *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable.* Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CC0640EN>

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Financial response

One of the main concerns for governments during the COVID-19 crisis has been the effect the pandemic has had on national economies. Five main areas were identified among the strategies and initiatives to strengthen countries' economic structures, and thus contain and channel their recovery: a) approval of financial recovery legislation; b) promotion of financing for circular economy programmes; c) prioritization of investments for women, Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent in vulnerable areas such as the Dry Corridor and Caribbean coastal regions; d) support for the business sector through: approval of loans and funds for small and medium-sized enterprises to avoid closure and encourage employment, legislation to strengthen rural associative enterprises, subsidies for electronic payment systems; and e) issue of legal reforms for debt rescheduling and reduction of interest rates on loans. The approval by Honduras of the "Temporary relief mechanisms to address the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis" in 2020 is acknowledged as a benchmark form of financial response.

Social protection

Social protection measures have also played a key role in national mitigation, containment and recovery processes to address COVID-19. This is due to their focus on caring for and safeguarding the most vulnerable sectors of the population, and the incentive they provide to maintain and to avoid disruptions to economic activities. During the pandemic crisis, social protection measures focused primarily on maintaining household economic levels, ensuring a minimum income to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis on Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). In terms of social protection measures, two main fields of action have been identified, i.e. social security and labour protection. Important work that has been done in the area of social security includes: a) approval of legislation to ensure access to the basic food basket in times of crisis; b) monetary transfers, through subsidies; distribution of food through food bags and baskets to vulnerable families, and delivery of healthy food to community kitchens. In the field of labour protection, the measures focused on the implementation of a furlough voucher scheme. The "Law to ensure access to the basic food basket during the COVID-19 emergency" in Costa Rica, and the "Community kitchens law" in Chile and Paraguay stand out as model social protection schemes.

**"PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE A
FUNDAMENTAL ROLE TO PLAY
IN DEVELOPING LEGISLATION
TO HELP THE MOST VULNERABLE
SECTORS AND ENSURING
THE NATION FULFILS
ITS OBLIGATIONS".**

Honourable Teresa Calix
*Member of Honduras Parliament
Regional Coordinator of the PFH*

⁶ (continued) Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and focal points of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO).



Food and nutrition security

In terms of the FNS debate, the Dialogues focused on the importance of legislative work to ensure access to food and facilitate the functioning and transition of food systems to more inclusive, sustainable and healthy models. The experiences shared addressed: a) development of specific laws for FNS, right to food, food sovereignty, and their respective regulations; b) approval of transitional measures to guarantee food production during the crisis through support to the farming sector; c) establishment of food emergency committees. This space also provided an opportunity to consolidate issues already discussed before COVID-19, but which are still very pertinent, such as: a) the promotion of breastfeeding as a baby's and mother's right; b) the promotion of school feeding programmes; food labelling; and bans on sugary drinks in schools; and c) mainstreaming an FNS approach in other areas such as climate change. The Zero Hunger Trust Fund Model implemented by St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an acknowledged example of good practice and a flagship FNS initiative in the region.

Agriculture

Agriculture took hold as an irrefutable response to the pandemic. The topic became a priority in parliamentary discourse due to its role as a guarantor of food access and availability, and a

means of promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of peoples. The following agricultural developments are important: a) financing programmes for producers in rural areas through the granting of loans to farmers, approval of supplementary budgets and trusts for the reconstruction and recovery of the agricultural sector; b) legislation for the promotion, marketing and protection of seeds; c) preparation of practical guides for parliamentarians and advisers on responsible investment in agriculture and food systems; d) awareness raising and implementation

“THE CRISIS IS AFFECTING THE ECONOMY AS WELL AS HEALTH, ESPECIALLY FARMING SYSTEMS AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS”.

Honourable Jairo Flores
Member of Honduras Parliament
General Coordinator of PFH

of legislation on agroecology; e) promotion of fairs during quarantine; f) differentiated payment schemes for staple products. Parliamentarians also followed the development of family farming (FF) with great interest. Important FF measures included: a) setting up of technical round tables for capacity building in FF; b) support for FF in maintaining a food supply as national strategies; c) promotion of specialized FF legislation; and d) development of programmes and legislation to support household and rural home gardens. El Salvador’s “Family Farming Law” stands out in this field because it was only recently approved and its contents mainstream a gender perspective.

Public procurement

The debate over the use of public procurement to secure supplies and maintain food production in a context of market access restrictions also resonated particularly with participants. The main initiatives presented were: a) setting national budgets for the purchase of food from national producers; b) promotion of participation mechanisms to include peasant, community and indigenous family farmers in public food procurement markets; c) studies for the promotion of nutritious beverages and snacks made from local products for children; and d) encouraging public institutions to obtain and consume local produce through public procurement. Experiences such as Colombia’s “Law 2046” on public procurement, or El Salvador’s “Law on the purchase and consumption of liquid milk and its derivatives”, are examples of these legislative developments.

Food loss and waste

The issue of food loss and waste is gaining traction on the Latin American and Caribbean legislative agenda. At regional level, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) has made praiseworthy efforts to develop a draft “Model Law on Food Loss and Waste” in the region. The approval of the “Law for the Prevention of Food Loss and Waste” in Colombia, and the draft law led by Costa Rica on the same subject, are also notable developments at national level.

Water

The topic of access to water also sparked illuminating discussion among parliamentarians. Water is crucial for the prevention and spread of disease, and it is essential to ensure hygiene in the context of COVID-19. The speakers addressed the issue of water from three angles: a) acknowledging access to water as a human right; b) penalizing major companies for crimes affecting water; c) the use

of water as a resource for sanitation. Costa Rica is singled out for supplementing Article 50 of its Political Constitution to add the following wording: “Every person has the basic and inalienable human right of access to safe drinking water as an essential resource for life”.

Alliances

The uncertainty and risk caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the cooperation, adaptation and response capacities of the multiple sectors jostling to interact in national and international arenas. Today, more than ever, we need closer coordination ties, support and understanding to design possible road maps to a more favourable, sustainable and mutually supportive future. The Parliamentary Dialogues were a timely space to reflect on the need to strengthen ties between the scientific community, civil society, academia, parliamentarians, the private sector, among others, in order to discuss the best way to address the consequences of COVID-19. During the Dialogues, a commitment was made to reactivate the relationship with the Spanish Parliamentary Alliance for the Right to Food, which will create a joint working agenda with the Parliamentary Front against Hunger (PFH), which will prioritize gender as a cross-cutting component of all its programmes. PARLATINO is also in the process of strengthening alliances with partners in other regions and mobilizing international cooperation resources for projects in the region.





PARLIAMENTARY FRONT AGAINST HUNGER (PFH)

The Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean plays a leading role in flanking, supporting and mainstreaming FNS into the region's political agenda. Since its adoption in 2009, the PFH has fostered consensus and interparliamentary dialogue to make

the Right to Food universal and promote FSN. The PFH is currently present in 21 national congresses and four regional parliaments. The work of the Fronts is founded on the establishment of a parliamentary culture based on multi-sectoral partnership and technical and scientific evidence. The PFH makes an important contribution by shoring up and supporting the process of passing specialized FNS legislation to address the pandemic. PFH support is evident in a large number of the region's FNS laws, which shows that PFH has a big impact on legislative advocacy. During the pandemic alone, the PFH

"PRESENT-DAY FOOD SYSTEMS COME AT A HIGH COST FOR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT. SCIENCE-BASED REGULATION IS ESSENTIAL".

Honourable Guido Girardi
Senator of Chile

has been involved in passing more than 20 laws. A clear correlation exists between the PFH and the number of FNS laws passed, in the sense that countries with a PFH tend to have more specialized FNS legislation to address COVID-19. The PFH’s approach to parliamentary work reinforces the idea of mutual cooperation, where countries are in a position to receive, but also to offer solutions that can impact and transform situations at various levels.

“I URGE PARLIAMENTARIANS TO CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARDS ZERO HUNGER, SO THAT EVEN IN THE FACE OF THE CRISIS CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC, THERE CAN BE AN EARLY AND STRONG RECOVERY”.

Honourable Hamlet Melo
Member of Parliament of the Dominican Republic
PFH Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean



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PARLATINO

PARLATINO is another important player in the region's parliamentary affairs. This body has helped to expand the influence and positioning of FNS within the parliamentary community of Latin America and the Caribbean through its Model Laws, which aim for legislative harmonization in regional integration processes. PARLATINO is able to call on valuable support from international organizations in order to define major principles and foundations. These are then offered as suggestions to the countries for consideration. Model legal frameworks are then generated to guide law-making by stakeholders.

It made its presence felt in the Parliamentary Dialogues through the progress made in regional legislation during the pandemic, including the Draft Model Law on Climate Change and Food and Nutrition Security, the Model Law on Community Water and Sanitation Systems and the Draft Model Law on Prevention and Reduction of Food Losses and Waste.

This body also issued important declarations to combat the effects of COVID-19, such as: the Declaration on international food distribution in the COVID-19 crisis, the Joint Declaration with FAO "Family Farming in the context of COVID-19" and the Joint Statement with FAO on Increasing Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems in the Face of the COVID-19 Crisis.

PARLATINO IS WORKING TO ENSURE THAT THE POST-COVID-19 SOCIOECONOMIC RECOVERY FAVOURS MORE INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS, AS WELL AS STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF PARLIAMENTARIANS".

Honourable Silvia Giacoppo
Senator from Argentina
President of the PARLATINO Executive Bureau

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

- ▶ Ensure access to healthy food;
- ▶ Tackle overweight and obesity;
- ▶ Tackle the high costs of healthy diets, which are among the highest in the world;
- ▶ Restore the oversight role of Parliaments to ensure transparency and effectiveness in reconstruction programmes and budget allocation control;
- ▶ Manage the increase in the national debt level;
- ▶ Counteract the fragility of food systems and the high dependence on global trade in food and foreign inputs;
- ▶ Tackle rising fiscal deficits, unemployment and poverty.



AFRICAN COUNTRIES⁷

THE REGION'S EXPERIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on all countries, especially those which are most vulnerable and fragile. All sectors have suffered, but agriculture has been disproportionately affected. However, FF has proven to be a key pillar in tackling the crisis and rehabilitating national economies. Within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF), more and more countries on the African continent are designing and approving their own FF action plans. This makes FF a strategic, desirable and necessary practice for recovering from the conditions created by COVID-19.

Parliamentarians play a key role in mainstreaming FSN, the right to food and more resilient agriculture into national legislation. National alliances in several African countries did a commendable job. COVID-19 does not respect borders, which makes parliamentary collaboration all the more necessary. The exchange of experiences, ideas and dialogue leads to innovation in strategies, policies and legislation.

The Parliamentary Dialogues sequence continued to offer an opportunity to parliamentarians from the African continent⁸ to gather virtually to present their legislative developments and experiences in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 and promoting FNS in the region at a time of crisis.



AFRICAN COUNTRIES / FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ In 2021, hunger affected 278 million people in Africa.
- ▶ One in five people in Africa (20.2 percent of the population) faced hunger in 2021, making it the most affected region in the world.
- ▶ Between 2019 and 2020, the cost of a healthy diet increased by 2.5 percent.
- ▶ In Africa, 1 031 million people could not afford a healthy diet by 2020, 25 million more than in 2019.
- ▶ Africa is the continent with the highest participation of women in the agricultural sector.
- ▶ Small and medium-sized food processors in Africa purchase 95 percent of their food supplies from smallholder farmers.

Source: FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2022. / *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable.* Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0640es>

⁷ The Parliamentary Dialogues for Africa and the Caribbean were held in a double session on 19 March and 15 April 2021.

⁸ The Parliamentary Dialogues for Africa were attended by parliamentary representation from: Benin,

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Social protection

The need to assist the most vulnerable and to build resilience of food systems was one of the main themes highlighted by participants. Social protection measures allow for the identification of the most vulnerable population pockets, while implementing concrete actions to meet basic needs. Within these mechanisms, the most important social protection measures used to counteract the effects of the pandemic are: a) food distribution, with policies such as the distribution of rice to people at risk of food insecurity in The Gambia; and b) the provision of financial resources, with initiatives such as the creation of special solidarity funds to support informal workers and people living in poverty in the case of Morocco. This last point also recognizes the Namibia's initiative of support cheques for the most vulnerable households, and the increase in budget allocations

"THE MOST WIDESPREAD
OPINION IS THAT RECOVERY
WILL BE POSSIBLE THANKS TO
AGRICULTURE...INVESTING IN THE
AGRICULTURE OFFERS A WAY OUT
OF THE PANDEMIC".

Honourable Omar Darboe
Member of the Gambian National Assembly

for social cash transfer programmes through the youth empowerment fund, as presented by Zambia. The Parliamentarians represented acknowledged the importance of social protection programmes and the need to increase the budget allocated to these items in order to protect the most vulnerable groups, especially women.

Food and nutrition security

The FNS debate dwelt upon the need to strengthen public-private partnerships to implement more durable and stable solutions to food availability in countries was reflected upon. In this regard, the

Moroccan representation put forward its Green Plan, which aims to guarantee market supply and ensure food availability in all cities. In addition, the increase in urban hunger, which was intensified by higher food prices, lack of transport and commodity restrictions during the pandemic, was addressed as a matter of concern. It was emphasized that hunger affects urban areas as well as rural areas, because the former encounter significant obstacles and difficulties in producing their own food. The Senegalese delegation made laudable efforts to implement food distribution structures through local networks, thus demonstrating the value of giving communities proper skills and training. The consequences of border closures on the food chain were also discussed. Along with reducing the flow of imports of basic foodstuffs such as rice and products from the meatpacking industry, the closures also paralysed the labour force from neighbouring countries. Initiatives in the region include: a) the development of legislation, such as special FNS policies and action plans; b) promotion of school feeding programmes; c) research on FSN; and d) promotion of institutionalism associated with FSN.

⁸ (continued) Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia, as well as focal points of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Parliamentary Assembly of Francophonie (FPA) and the Pan-African Parliamentary Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (PAPA-FSN).



Agriculture

The region's parliamentarians unanimously agreed that investment in agriculture was paramount to guide recovery processes in the face of the pandemic. Agriculture, but especially FF, offers an opportunity to secure FSN, improve livelihoods, better manage natural resources, protect the environment and achieve sustainable development especially in rural areas.

The parliamentarians discussed the main policies promoted, these included: a) assistance to farmers in the form of equipment and inputs; a) approval of insurance schemes; b) establishment of subsidies and stimulus funds for the agricultural sector; c) financing of food production programmes; d) distribution of seeds and animal vaccines, among others. The need for further investment in agricultural modernization and mechanization was identified, as well that of implementing ecological models to foster resilience, improve production, ensure self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on imports.

“PARLIAMENTARIANS PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN ENSURING THAT FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION ARE A PRIORITY IN THE PUBLIC POLICIES AND LAWS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES”.

Honourable Mohammed Touimi
*Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of
 Deputies of Morocco*

Gender

COVID-19 has left its mark on the widening gender inequality gaps in the region. The central role that women play in agricultural production and food security in their communities has been acknowledged. For this reason, participants agreed on the importance of including specific forms of support for women in recovery plans, with a special emphasis on women food producers. In this field, initiatives such as that of the Gambia stand out, with the approval of a law to promote women's entrepreneurship, and Zambia's establishment of a women's empowerment fund to benefit women's cooperatives.

“WOMEN ARE A VULNERABLE GROUP THAT MERITS SPECIAL ATTENTION... WHERE WOMEN ARE AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC, CHILDREN ARE AS WELL.”

Honourable Fatoumata Njie
Member of the Gambian National Assembly



Access to information

One very valuable asset was access to information and the interchange of knowledge. Parliamentarians agreed on the importance of socializing and sharing knowledge and experiences in order to move more quickly out of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide opportunities for a more solid and lasting recovery. Similarly, it was emphasized that the availability of public information helps ensure transparency and combat corruption.

Sustainability and climate change

The debate in this area focused on the need to generate arrangements to ensure that production approaches and the culture of consumption move towards sustainability and environmental balance. The need to mainstream food loss and waste management systems in the countries was also stressed, with parliaments coming up with appropriate measures to shoulder the ensuing social and environmental consequences.

“ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS TOWARDS RECOVERY HAS BEEN TO ACCURATELY TRACK INFORMATION... IN THIS REGARD, PARLIAMENTARIANS COOPERATE WITH NGOS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN ORDER TO HAVE A FULL PICTURE OF THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE MEASURES WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN TO PROTECT HEALTH AND PROVIDE RELIEF”.

Honourable Mwilola Imakando
Member of the Zambian Parliament

Alliances

Alliances are valuable in times of crisis like the one we are currently living through. They are the key to helping countries overcome the effects of the pandemic, and are essential for bringing about change at national and international level.

The participation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Network of Parliamentarians on Gender Equality and Investments in Agriculture and Food Security, the French-speaking Parliamentary Assembly (FPA) and the Pan-African Partnership for Food Security and Nutrition (PAPA-FSN) offered valuable flanking and support to the region in the framework of FAO's work with the parliamentary sector.

ECOWAS

ECOWAS is a regional grouping of 15 countries established in 1975. The ECOWAS Network of Parliamentarians on Gender Equality and Investments in Agriculture and Food Security involves lawmakers from several West African countries in promoting parliamentary efforts to foster responsible investment in agriculture and gender-sensitive legislative action. The Network aims to provide ECOWAS parliamentarians with knowledge and skills to advocate for gender-equitable agricultural investments and to influence policy advocacy processes at national, regional and international levels. ECOWAS and FAO collaborate in the “Establishing a Hunger-Free Initiative for West Africa” project, to support their governmental and non-governmental partners along the road to a hunger-free Africa.

FPA

The FPA is a consultative body of the International Organization of La Francophonie, which comprises a global community of 56 member parliaments, 17 associates and 17 observers. The



FPA represents the interests and aspirations of the peoples of the French-speaking world and works to promote democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights within this language community. The FPA promotes cooperation and strengthens solidarity within French-speaking communities, mainly aiming its actions at parliaments in the global south. It is also committed to promoting sustainable development by supporting improved economic governance, capacity building, cooperation and the search for common positions in key international negotiations. With the signing of a partnership agreement in 2020, FAO and the FPA agreed to focus their efforts on capacity building and advocacy activities in six areas: agroecology; bioeconomy, particularly in urban settings; food waste reduction; access to land; and cross-cutting issues, namely gender equality and digital innovation in agriculture.

PAPA-FSN

The 250-member Pan-African Parliament (PAP) established the PAPA-FSN at the end of 2016 with the support of FAO. The PAP's stated aims are to promote: a) the positioning of the FSN issue at the top of political agendas to achieve the SDGs in Africa; and b) the consolidation of the PAPA-FSN as a regional platform to offer African parliamentarians a space for dialogue and formalization of agreements on issues related to FSN. FAO and the PAP have established a strategic partnership designed to enhance parliamentary capacities to prioritize the eradication of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, address the structural challenges that limit FSN from a human rights-based approach, and promote the creation of appropriate legal and institutional environments for the development of FNS. FAO is currently working with the PAP to develop the first Food Security and Nutrition Framework Act to guide African countries in establishing effective legislative frameworks to address the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

- ▶ During the Parliamentary Dialogues, the following regional goals and challenges were identified:
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic has limited work on gender equality, investment in agriculture and food security.
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has led to market disruptions such as: price increases, dependence on commodity imports, and food shortages especially in rural areas.
- ▶ Movement restrictions have had a serious impact on food security, as they have made it difficult to deliver inputs due to the collapse of internal distribution systems, which in turn has made it difficult to grow a wide variety of crops.
- ▶ The following strategic areas of work have been identified to address the aftermath of COVID-19: a) renewal and promotion of legal frameworks associated with FSN, b) promotion of work in associations and cooperatives, c) prioritization and strengthening of capacities and resources for women because of their impact on FSN at community level.
- ▶ Land fragmentation, as well as land degradation due to overexploitation, soil erosion and low fertility, are some of the region's challenges
- ▶ COVID-19 recovery measures should be framed within existing programmes, and it is worth noting that the pandemic has taken hold in regions already suffering from the effects of climate change and conflict, so recovery measures must also respond to circumstances and adapt to the particular challenges of each country.
- ▶ A link exists between food security and the political instability, violence and insecurity experienced in some countries, which must be properly understood in order to bring about sound change and progress.
- ▶ Efforts to ensure FNS must address access to land, the human right to adequate food (HRAF), the right to peace and the link between humanitarian action, development and peace.



NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA⁹

THE REGION'S EXPERIENCE

The Near East and North Africa region is characterized by contrasts, as some of the world's richest countries share the land mass with some of the world's least developed nations. The region also faces particular challenges related to food security and nutrition, including water scarcity, dependence on food imports and high rates of overweight and obesity.

The Parliamentary Dialogues in the Near East and North Africa region brought together five parliamentary delegations¹⁰ and the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils of Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA) focal point.

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Financial response

Parliamentarians expressed their concern over the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 health crisis, especially for developing countries. Access to vaccines is crucial to preventing the spread and emergence of new infections, which have a profound impact on countries' economies and food security. Three main frameworks for action stand out among regional economic strategies: a) the establishment of economic recovery policies; b) the allocation of funds for food financing; and c) the approval of emergency budgets with economic and social incentives. The case of Algeria is identified



NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA / FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ In 2020, the number of undernourished people reached 69 million, or 15.8 percent of the population.
- ▶ Severe food insecurity affected 49.4 million people in the region.
- ▶ It is estimated that one third of the region's population (32.3 percent), did not have regular access to a healthy diet in 2020.
- ▶ The latest data from the region show that 28.8 percent of the adult population is obese.
- ▶ In 2020, the prevalence of anaemia in women of reproductive age (15-49 years) was 33.5 percent, indicating a considerable public health problem in the region.
- ▶ Conflicts are the main cause of hunger in the region.

Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and ESCWA. 2021. Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa 2021 - Statistics and Trends <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1471023/>

⁹ The Parliamentary Dialogues for the Near East, North Africa and Ethiopia region took place on 1 April 2021.

¹⁰ The Parliamentary Dialogues were attended by parliamentarians from: Algeria, Kingdom of Bahrain, Ethiopia, Libya and Yemen.

as a benchmark, with the implementation of an economic and social recovery plan based on promoting economic diversification and reducing dependence on hydrocarbons.

Food and nutrition security

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region found it difficult to commit to FNS and hunger eradication. The current health crisis has only made this situation even more acute. Among the measures promoted by the countries to strengthen FNS in the region, the following initiatives have been identified: a) drafting of FNS legislation; b) setting up and strengthening of food reserves in order to ensure food availability and access; c) approval of specific budgets for FNS; d) cross-country food aid initiatives; and e) FNS-related institution building. The representative of Bahrain notably called for all delegations present to commit to allocating funds to finance food reserves in 2021-2025 national budgets.

“THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN FOOD SECURITY AND PEACE, AND IT IS WORTH REMEMBERING THAT THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE PANDEMIC, THOUGH PERHAPS TEMPORARY, COULD BE DEVASTATING FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES”.

Honourable Basheer Alhowsh
*Member of the High Council of State of Libya
Rapporteur for the Arab countries in the
Parliamentary Network for Food Security and
Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World*





Agriculture

The Regional Action Plan for Family Farming is led by FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Its pillars are sustainable and innovative practices; decent rural employment opportunities and complementary social protection measures; and capacity of rural organizations and institutions to improve access to local services and markets. The parliamentary representations tabled issues of national interest in the field of agriculture, and put forward various proposals for their promotion from the congresses. The main topics discussed included: a) soil quality improvement; b) development of agricultural technologies, especially irrigation; c) education and training for farmers; d) strengthening of agricultural investment, especially in FF; e) agricultural diversification; f) strengthening resilience in rural areas; and g) involvement of young people in agriculture.

**“THE ROLE OF
PARLIAMENTARIANS LIES IN
THE USE OF CONSTITUTIONAL
INSTRUMENTS, IN THE
OVERSIGHT OF THE
EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE
ALLOCATION OF ADEQUATE
BUDGETS FOR FNS”.**

Honourable Jihad Al-Fathel
*Member of the Shura Council of
the Kingdom of Bahrain
Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary
Network for Food Security and
Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World*



“LEGISLATIVE MEASURES SHOULD AIM AT STRENGTHENING INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE, ESPECIALLY IN FF; ADDRESSING THE LACK OF RESOURCES IN THE FUTURE; IMPROVING INTERREGIONAL EXCHANGES AND GOVERNANCE; HAVING PLANS AND PROJECTS IN PLACE TO COPE WITH POTENTIAL CRISES...”

Honourable Mohammad Altayeb
ASSECAA Yemen Deputy Secretary General

Environment

The parliamentary delegations discussed natural resource management and the challenges facing the region linked to climate change, but mainly water scarcity. On this topic, the parliamentarians focused on the protection of water resources, their conservation and access to the region's water reserves. FAO was called upon to help by conducting studies on the water use rationalization. The discussions also addressed desertification and the development of strategies for the use of natural resources through

smart, green practices. Renewable energies were also touched on in the debate, with participants focusing on the design of formulas to guarantee self-sufficiency and thus avoid the rural exodus.

ASSOCIATION OF SENATES, SHOORA AND EQUIVALENT COUNCILS OF AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD

Since its launch in 2019, the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECCA) has been working closely with FAO, within the framework of its Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa. With the launch of the Parliamentary Network on Food Security in Africa and the Arab World, ASSECCA proposes to foster coordination between parliaments in the region to encourage them to work towards the development of FSN legislation and promote the right to food.

“I RECOMMEND THAT COUNTRIES ENSURE GREATER SUPPORT FOR FARMERS AND MORE WIDESPREAD USE OF TECHNOLOGY, AND I CALL ON PARLIAMENTARIANS TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT WILL ENSURE FOOD SECURITY IN THE MEDIUM AND LONG TERM AS THE WORLD RECOVERS FROM THE PANDEMIC.”

Honourable Abdulwasei Yusuf Ali
*Secretary General of the Association of Senates,
 Ethiopia's Shura and Equivalent Councils in
 Africa and the Arab World (ASSECCA)*

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

During the Parliamentary Dialogues, the following major regional challenges were identified:

- ▶ Need to build confidence among international organizations about working and setting up a presence in the region.
- ▶ High dependence on commodity and food imports.
- ▶ High rates of obesity and overweight.
- ▶ The youth sector is affected by a high unemployment rate of around 30 percent.
- ▶ Insufficient infrastructure for agriculture.
- ▶ Rising temperatures and sea levels as a result of climate change.
- ▶ Water scarcity, with a 66 percent reduction in water resources.
- ▶ Worrying advances in agricultural land degradation and desertification.
- ▶ Security challenges due to terrorism and organized crime.
- ▶ Strong waves of migration due to armed conflict.
- ▶ Population growth rates among the highest in the world.
- ▶ Malfunctioning of food supply chains and reduced trade due to the pandemic.



ASIA-PACIFIC¹¹

THE REGION'S EXPERIENCE

Although Asia has made progress in reducing the number of hungry people, the region is still home to more than half of the world's undernourished. The Parliamentary Dialogues were an opportunity to explore solutions to the food and nutrition security challenges that Asian countries have been facing in recent years, which have been exacerbated by the onset of the pandemic.

Three quarters of the world's family farmers live in this region. Within the framework of the UN Decade of Family Farming, the region has adopted three national FF action plans in Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines, and is in the process of consulting on and drafting three more in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Japan and Laos. At the regional level, consultations for the drafting of regional action plans have been initiated in South Asia, in partnership with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) secretariat, and in Southeast Asia, in partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) secretariat.

IMPORTANT TOPICS

The Asia-Pacific region reported on a number of public policies and legislative developments during the Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues. For example, the Philippines prepared a strategic development framework for the modernization



ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES / FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ In 2021, hunger affected 425 million people in Asia. This region is home to more than half of the world's hungry people.
- ▶ The prevalence of undernourishment at regional level reached 9.1 percent in 2021.
- ▶ In 2021, approximately 37.5 million people were severely food insecure.
- ▶ Between 2019 and 2020, Asia recorded a 4 percent uptick in the cost of a healthy diet, making it the region with the highest change.
- ▶ Some 1891.4 million people could not afford a healthy diet by 2020, 78 million more than in 2019.

Source: FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/fr/c/cc0640en/>

¹¹ The Asia Parliamentary Dialogues took place on 6 September 2021. This event brought together the parliamentary delegations of: China, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, and ASEAN focal points.



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and industrialization of agriculture, FNS, and resilience, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry through a consultation process with the aim of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The presentations also highlighted Vietnam's Government Nutrition Action Plan 2021-2030, which promotes FNS by improving the population's nutritional conditions and access to healthy diets. Legislation in the process of approval includes the Food and Nutrition Security Bill initiative of China, as well as the Indonesian Food Bill, which will include the creation of a National Food Agency, in charge of coordinating the country's food production and supply.

“COVID-19 HAS CAUSED DISRUPTIONS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN AND CHANGES IN NUTRITION PATTERNS, AND PART OF THE POPULATION HAS BEEN IMPOVERISHED BY THE LOSS OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND WORK”.

Financial response

The various speeches by parliamentarians covered economic and trade measures. In the short term, these measures have sought to counteract the effects of COVID-19 restrictions in determining an economic slowdown and dependence on food

Honourable Lur Van Kam
 Member of the Social Affairs Committee
 of the National Assembly of Vietnam

“THE NATIONAL PEOPLE’S CONGRESS OF CHINA (NPC) HAS RESPONDED TO THE PANDEMIC BY EXAMINING NATIONAL HEALTH TOPICS, PROMOTING AGRICULTURE, AND DRAFTING A FOOD SECURITY LAW.”

Honourable Deyin Du
Vice-Chair of the thirteenth Committee on Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the National People’s Congress of China (NPCARAC)

and commodity imports; and in the long term, to correct the structural flaws that limit fair and free trade. The main initiatives promoted by Asian countries include: a) approving special budgets for programmes to stimulate local economies; b) setting up loan funds to promote employment, trade, tourism and construction during the pandemic; d) promoting food trade; e) supporting agricultural exports; f) strengthening trade legislation with an emphasis on the food supply chain and exports. Parliamentarians voiced a need for appropriate structures to be put in place to strengthen trade systems and generate greater

market transparency, seeking to achieve free and fair trade standards. This initiative will be echoed by Japan’s representation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G20.



Social protection

In times of crisis such as the current one, social protection programmes focus on ensuring that the basic needs of vulnerable people are met. The most notable social protection initiatives in the region include the mobilization of resources for food aid to vulnerable families and the unemployed, and the promotion of measures to protect children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Thailand's benchmark Relief and Recovery Bill earmarks 9 percent of GDP to mitigate the most severe impacts of the pandemic through cash transfers, direct payments and vouchers to farmers and vulnerable groups to reduce living costs.

Food and nutrition security

The parliamentary debate focused on the need to ensure FSN, dwelling particularly on interventions to ensure the quality and quantity of food production and to maintain a well-functioning supply chain. The most salient measures include: a) approval of special budgets for programmes associated with FNS; b) strengthening of school feeding programmes that promote nutrition training for parents; c) improvement of food supply chains; d) promotion of research on FNS (types of malnutrition, food costs, health, production, processing, storage and distribution, etc.); e) promotion of specialized institutions in charge of FNS; and f) promotion of programmes to optimize the management of kitchen gardens. The "Sustainable Food Reserve Gardens" initiative

"THE CURRENT DEBATE ON FNS AND FOOD SYSTEMS ADDRESSES LOGISTICS, PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION. IN THE TIME OF COVID-19, IT IS ABOUT MAINTAINING A BALANCE BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND AT GLOBAL LEVEL".

Honourable Keisuke Suzuki
*Director General of the Japan
Parliamentary Friendship League*





in Indonesia was identified as a good practice as it is a kitchen garden programme that promotes diversified and healthy diets at community level. Another noteworthy achievement was the setting up of an FNS and Agriculture Working Group to respond to the Pakistan emergency, which aimed to provide nationwide assistance.

Agriculture

The parliamentarians viewed agriculture as an area of great interest because of its potential to increase household incomes and food availability during the pandemic. The following agricultural measures were promoted: a) approval of special budgets for agrifood production programmes; b) establishment of funds to alleviate the effects of droughts and pests; c) direct cash transfers for agricultural producers; d) promotion of programmes to increase and improve cropland; e) establishment of state food farms and public properties for sustainable food production; f) seed research and intellectual property protection; g) guaranteed minimum prices for food products to increase production. The Mongolian representation reported on a local good practice example whereby 60 greenhouses were given to female heads of households in a vulnerable region, with the aim of increasing income and food during the pandemic.

Other matters

During the Parliamentary Dialogues plenary session, parliamentarians had the opportunity to discuss other issues of interest such as transport. In the time of COVID-19 it is well known that there has been pressure on cross-border and internal transport, and countries are encouraged to put in place measures to encourage the establishment of temporary food stocks and reserves to reduce the stress on this sector. Technological innovation was also addressed as an area of interest. In agriculture, countries were urged to invest resources in crop research to improve their seeds, as well as to invest in the development of innovative technologies that provide the agricultural sector with the means of monitoring soil needs, properly determining parameters for fertilizer use, and reducing water wastage through irrigation. Lastly, the effects of COVID-19 are compounded when coupled with other problems, such as climate change, conflicts, pests, diseases, etc. Governments are therefore urged to seek solutions based on an approach that: strengthens supply chains; promotes investment policies for food and agriculture; supports FNS value chains; designs legal frameworks that mitigate and anticipate future pandemics and crises; and promotes the circular economy and renewable and sustainable practices.

“PARLIAMENTARIANS AND GOVERNMENTS NEED TO PROMOTE GOOD QUALITY FOOD SYSTEMS THAT ARE JOINED UP, FLEXIBLE, BALANCED, STABLE AND SAFE”.

Honourable Unurbolor Damdinsuren
Member of the Mongolian Parliament

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 HAS BEEN VERY STRONG FROM A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW, ESPECIALLY ON WOMEN, CHILDREN AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND THE POOREST. POVERTY, POPULATION GROWTH, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD INSECURITY ARE CLOSELY LINKED”.

Honourable Nguyen Tuong Van
Secretary General of the ASEAN
Interparliamentary Assembly



INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN NATIONS

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Interparliamentary Assembly saw the Dialogue as a springboard for developing and implementing future solutions aimed at food security. It stressed the relevance of the partnership with ASEAN and in the framework of the FAO Memorandum of Understanding – ASEAN, FAO and AIPA (ASEAN Interparliamentary Assembly) are discussing a partnership agreement designed to involve lawmakers from their member states in promoting cooperation in the areas of agricultural investment, food and nutrition security, among others.

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

During the Parliamentary Dialogues, the following major regional challenges were identified:

- ▶ Accelerated growth of a very diverse and young population.
- ▶ Climate change facilitates the emergence of wide-ranging threats such as drought, conflict and pests (locusts).
- ▶ Uncontrolled conversion of agricultural land into mining, industrial and commercial land.
- ▶ Need to protect soils, avoid excessive use of fertilizers, increase responsible agricultural investments and promote healthy diets.
- ▶ Need to apply information technology (IT)-based solutions to the agricultural sector and move towards a holistic approach that addresses rural agricultural development and smart and resilient food systems.
- ▶ Search for solutions that require an approach that: 1. continue to review and develop legal frameworks to strengthen supply chains; 2. promote open and responsible investment policies for food and agriculture; 3. support FNS value chains; 4. design legal frameworks to help mitigate and prepare for future pandemics and crises; 5. boost the circular economy and renewable and sustainable energy practices
- ▶ Logistics and transport hurdles caused by prevention and containment measures and the need to activate measures to overcome these difficulties.
- ▶ Generation of dependence on commodity imports due to pandemic-related trade restrictions.
- ▶ Contraction of the innovation economy (industrial and manufacturing sectors).



Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition

Madrid, 29-30 October 2016

VIRTUAL PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE – GLOBAL¹²

EXPERIENCE¹³

The Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues organized by FAO and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) provided a meeting place for lawmakers to exchange, be inspired, learn and coordinate, considering parliamentary initiatives, regulatory frameworks, good practices and lessons learned, with a view to mitigating and addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and putting FNS at the top of political agendas.

We still need to generate a coordinated and multidimensional approach to avoid a historic setback in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Parliamentary partnerships are crucial to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, ensuring government accountability and implementation of policy commitments. FAO recognizes the importance of parliamentary partnerships, and with the adoption of its new *Strategic Framework for 2022-2031*, seeks to drive the transformation of agrifood systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, and in turn lead to reducing hunger, poverty and inequality.

“PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD TOOK DECISIVE ACTION COUNTER THE EFFECTS OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR NEW LAWS AND POLICIES AIMED AT ERADICATING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION, NEW LEGISLATIONS WERE IMPLEMENTED IN RECORD TIME”.

Dr. Qu Dongyu, *Director General of FAO*

DIÁLOGO GLOBAL / DATOS Y CIFRAS

- ▶ In 2021, between 702 million and 828 million people (an average of 768 million) went hungry. The number has increased by some 150 million since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic - 103 million more people between 2019 and 2020 and 46 million more people in 2021.
- ▶ Globally and in all regions, the prevalence of food insecurity is higher among women than among men.
- ▶ Nearly 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020 due to rising costs.
- ▶ Globally, it is estimated that in 2020, 22 percent of children under five years of age were stunted, 6.7 percent were wasted and 5.7 percent were overweight.
- ▶ Around 670 million people are projected to remain hungry by 2030, around 8 percent of the world's population, which is on a par with the figures presented in 2015, when the 2030 Agenda was launched.

Source: FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/fr/cc0640en/>

¹² The Global Dialogue took place on 22 September 2021.

¹³ The Virtual Parliamentary Dialogue series was attended by around 500 participants, including 80 parliamentarians from 50 countries, and 7 parliamentary alliances and intergovernmental organizations.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Global Dialogue was well attended by parliamentarians from the Americas. On this occasion, national delegations from Chile, Costa Rica, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic and Uruguay participated, together with PARLATINO authorities and the PFH coordination.

At national level, Uruguay made key advances in FSN, such as setting up a Special Multiparty Commission on the Right to Food within its Assembly, promoting actions for FSN with a gender perspective. In order to address FSN, we must acknowledge and promote the human right to adequate food (HRAF), along with a gender mainstreaming approach, recognizing the key role of women in the transformation and sustainability of food systems. Costa Rica also upheld the need for access to healthy diets, arguing that meeting the minimum calorie requirements is not enough. Food systems must be able to provide healthy and sustainable diets to ensure food security for all,

without compromising people's rights, well-being or the environment. The US delegation addressed the positioning of FSN in the migrant population. It was argued that food aid should be available regardless of migration status, to ensure that all those in need have access to safe, healthy and adequate food.

**“THE EFFECTIVE
IMPLEMENTATION OF
LAWS, REGULATIONS AND
PUBLIC POLICIES SHOULD BE
ACCOMPANIED BY A CLOSE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PARLIAMENTS AND THE
EXECUTIVE, AS WELL AS
THE ESTABLISHMENT AND
APPROVAL OF ADEQUATE
BUDGETS TO ENSURE THE
END OF HUNGER AND
MALNUTRITION”.**

Honourable Beatriz Argimó
*Vice-President of the
Oriental Republic of Uruguay and
President of the General Assembly
and of the Senate*

At regional level, the work done by the PFH on the approval of reforms was recognized. This focuses on constitutional and associated legislation in the fields of FF, food labelling, water, climate change and FNS. Work was also promoted on policy monitoring, public auditing and accountability, and access to public information. The PFH's efforts to set up an Ibero-American Alliance for SDG 2 Zero Hunger and SDG 5 Gender Equality to address the impact of the pandemic were highlighted. These led to the preparation of a joint document that was presented during the Food Systems Summit, which focused on women and Indigenous Peoples. Finally, the PFH coordination called for recognition that populations in rural areas and workers in the informal sector are among those most affected by COVID-19. It is therefore also necessary to encourage appropriate discussion and responses to support

these sectors promptly and efficiently. PARLATINO also reported on its progress in legislation and regional integration. In this way, the main workstreams in the region were identified as promoting FA; encouraging responsible investment in agriculture; supporting the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables; adopting measures to mitigate environmental impact; participating in a number of FNS debates; developing new legislative instruments such as model laws on loss and waste, school feeding, food labelling and FF; and fostering public-private partnerships with civil society and academia to move towards the achievement of SDG 2.

AFRICA

Africa was represented by Gabon and the FPA. The Gabonese parliamentary delegation discussed innovative parliamentary actions, stating that these should address the fight against hunger, climate change, and agroecology. It was also emphasized that achieving the SDGs remains the main objective. Investment is also needed to improve and consolidate agrifood systems. Finally, a call was made to recognize the contribution of women in the development of societies and the importance of continuing to support them in parliamentary partnerships. Women are changemakers. They must be present in decision-making spaces and their invaluable contribution must be made visible.

At the regional level, the FPA stressed the importance of ensuring that the actions of the executive are backed by the legislature. Such actions must respond in a proactive and effective manner to specificities in order to consolidate FNS governance while ensuring sustainability and adaptability. Due to the partnership between the FPA and FAO, awareness and information campaigns have been launched to guarantee the right to adequate food and help eradicate hunger in the region.

ASIA-PACIFIC

The Asia-Pacific region was represented at the Global Dialogue by delegations from Pakistan, Thailand and the ASEAN Interparliamentary Assembly (AIPA). The Pakistani representation reported that they have managed to maintain food security in their country, through highly successful strategies such as banning the export of certain staple foods consumed by 70 percent of the population (such as potatoes, tomatoes, wheat, sugar and onions) to ensure there were enough national supplies; imposing controls on livestock trade to controls; foreign donor funding, which proved very useful for maintaining a supply of certain foods that were normally imported; and government subsidies offered directly to shops and to 40 percent of consumers. The Thai parliamentary representation reported on several success stories of interventions targeting

“IN THE TIME OF COVID-19, GREATER COLLABORATION AT LOCAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO COMBAT HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION IS POSSIBLE.”

Honorable Kraissid Tontisirin
Senator of Thailand
Chair of the Senate Subcommittee
on Agricultural Production

“WOMEN’S ROLE IS VITAL, THEY MUST BE PRESENT IN DECISION-MAKING SPACES. WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES MUST BE MADE VISIBLE, THEY ARE AGENTS OF DEVELOPMENT”.

Honourable Angelique Ngoma a
Member of the National Assembly of Gabon
Chair of the Cooperation and Development
Committee of the French-speaking
Parliamentary Assembly (FPA)

the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people such as: rural stimulus packages, cash transfers, recovery packages, targeted technical assistance and small loans for unemployment and new school feeding schemes. However, the representation stressed the importance of taking measures to strengthen fair trade systems and increase market transparency, support community-based programmes, avoid overuse of fertilizers and protect soils, implement the right to food strategy, and encourage investment in research and smart agriculture.

At regional level, ASEAN reported that agriculture and forestry ministers issued a joint statement calling for

solutions and recommendations to improve FSN and food safety in the region. The following were also encouraged: review and development of legal frameworks to strengthen regional supply chains; promotion of open, sustainable and responsible investment policies for food and agriculture; support to agrifood value chains for FSN; design of legal frameworks for the prevention and mitigation of pandemics and other emergencies; promotion of the circular economy and renewable and sustainable energy practices.

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The region was represented at the event by a parliamentary delegation from Bahrain and ASSECCA. The Bahraini representation reported on its national initiatives, which are showing signs of progress in improving FNS at national level. The most noteworthy experiences include a proposal to create an Arab Centre for FNS, and a proposal to approve the international year of FNS before Parliament, with the aim of encouraging the participation of civil society organizations.

At regional level, the ASSECCA delegation emphasized that the recognition of food and nutrition security is not a luxury, and for this reason USD 9 000 000 000 has been approved to promote initiatives to support the agricultural system and investment programmes in agricultural and food reserves.

EUROPE

The European community was represented by Spain and the European Parliamentary Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition. The Spanish delegation reported on the Spanish Alliance for the Right to Food, which seeks to put the right to food and FSN on the Spanish political agenda and that of the European Parliament. The importance of constitutional recognition of HRAF was highlighted, and parliaments were called on to include it in their political agendas, working together on targets associated with the eradication of hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2) and gender (SDG 5). Equality between men and women is crucial. If this precondition is not met, it will be difficult to achieve the SDGs on time.

At regional level, it was stated that the European Union (EU) must lead the way towards more sustainable agricultural and food systems, based on human and labour rights, fair competition and environmental protection. There is a need for cooperation-based interventions, with the aim of strengthening scientific knowledge and supporting developing countries so that they too can produce more food with fewer resources. Given that one third of the population cannot afford a healthy diet, diets such as the Mediterranean diet should be encouraged, because this uses resources more efficiently and sustainably and benefits human health. The EU “Farm to Fork” and “Green Pact” strategies were highlighted as leading initiatives in the field of FSN. The challenge of better defining a sustainable food system, taking into account the needs of different countries, their environments and opportunities, was also raised. The broad need for access to

**“FOOD SECURITY AND
NUTRITION IS NOT A LUXURY,
BUT A COMMON CONCERN”.**

Honourable Jihad Al-Fathel
*Member of the Shura Council of
the Kingdom of Bahrain
Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary
Network for Food Security and Nutrition
in Africa and the Arab World*

seeds and fertilizers, knowledge, markets and trade was also raised, since agriculture also provides valuable economic and social opportunities, and addressing them correctly is essential, especially during the pandemic.

“THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS IS A GLOBAL ISSUE FACING MULTIPLE CHALLENGES; RESPONSES MUST BE GLOBAL AND EVERYONE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUPPLY CHAIN.”

Honourable Marlene Mortler
*Member of the European Parliament and
of the European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger
and Malnutrition*

MAIN MESSAGES BY REGION

During the Global Parliamentary Dialogue, the following messages of interest to the regions were identified:

Latin America and the Caribbean

- ▶ The value of creating specialized institutions within parliaments to promote FSN was noted, as well as the need to strengthen the relationship between the executive and the legislature for the effective implementation of laws, regulations and public policies.
- ▶ The importance of the gender approach to ensuring HRAF was highlighted, recognizing the key role of women in the transformation and sustainability of food systems. It is crucial to strengthen initiatives that promote SDG 2 Zero Hunger and SDG 5 Gender in order to address the impacts of the pandemic.
- ▶ The importance of access to healthy diets was emphasized; providing the minimum number of calories minimum is not enough to guarantee food security for the population.
- ▶ The nations were urged to view the provision of food aid as a duty, regardless of whether an individual is a migrant or not, thus facilitating access to safe, healthy and adequate food.
- ▶ The importance of promoting mechanisms for policy control, audits and accountability, as well as promoting access to public information on FNS was highlighted.

Africa

- ▶ The importance of investing in the improvement and consolidation of agrifood systems was stressed.
- ▶ Women’s contribution to the development of societies was accorded special recognition, and nations were urged to support, promote and ensure women’s participation in parliaments and decision-making spaces.
- ▶ A need to harmonize the actions of the executive and the legislature was stressed, in order to consolidate FNS governance based on sustainability and adaptability.

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Asia Pacific

- ▶ The importance of developing appropriate and specialized strategies for securing FNS in the time of COVID-19 was stressed. These included reducing exports to secure a domestic supply, providing local trade subsidies, and international aid.
- ▶ The importance of strengthening fair trade systems and increasing market transparency was highlighted.
- ▶ The value of encouraging investment in research and smart agriculture was recognized.
- ▶ The importance of adapting and developing regional legal frameworks to strengthen supply chains, investment policies for food and agriculture, circular economies, promotion of renewable and sustainable energies, prevention and mitigation of emergencies, among others, was pointed out.

Near East and North Africa

- ▶ The establishment of specialized institutions, such as the Arab Centre for FSN, has been encouraged to strengthen and advance the right to adequate food.
- ▶ The adoption of the International Year of FSN was proposed as a means of progressing towards HRAF and as a mechanism to promote the integration and participation of civil society organizations at country level.
- ▶ The importance of approving dedicated budgets to support agriculture and food systems was emphasized.

Europa

- ▶ The importance of promoting the inclusion of HRAF in constitutions was highlighted.
- ▶ A call was made to promote gender equality to support the fight to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and as a key and necessary part of achieving the SDGs within the required period.
- ▶ Cooperation is urged to strengthen scientific knowledge and support developing countries in building capacity to produce healthy food and diets efficiently and sustainably.
- ▶ A challenge was issued to better define the concept of a sustainable food system, taking into account the heterogeneity and specificities of countries and regions.
- ▶ The need to improve access to knowledge, markets and trade, as well as to seeds and fertilizers was stressed, recognizing that these farming-related factors have the potential to improve people's social and economic conditions, especially during pandemics.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Global Dialogue was the culminating event in the series of Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues organized by FAO and AECID. It provided an opportunity to compile and share valuable reflections on the work and experience of parliamentarians from different parts of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section outlines the main lessons learned from this meeting, as well as the most influential legislative developments and challenges that were reported on during the session:

- ▶ The Parliamentary Dialogues revealed that a lot of legislative activity has taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This reflects the level of commitment, ingenuity and innovative thinking that the parliamentary sector has brought to bear in order to lessen the impact of the pandemic, particularly in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.
- ▶ Parliamentary action is vital in developing legal frameworks, political oversight and budget allocations that will pave the way for faster recovery from the effects of the pandemic.
- ▶ Women parliamentarians play a critical role as changemakers in the promotion and adoption of policies, legal frameworks and incentives for food system transformation. Partnerships with the parliamentary sector are important to FAO, as they complement and strengthen its four priority pillars: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life.
- ▶ A gender perspective is a key part of ensuring HRAF. Achieving gender equality is no longer just another empty promise in the set of international human rights commitments made by countries, but has become a mandatory condition, without which it will be impossible to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and achieve the SDGs.
- ▶ Coordination among national powers is essential to strengthen the nation and counteract the COVID-19 aftermath. It is vital to encourage partnerships between the executive and the legislature that harmonize their objectives and goals. This will strengthen the spirit of cooperation between national powers so that they can design medium- and long-term national public policies, unfettered by political or partisan constraints.
- ▶ In Latin America and the Caribbean, the PFHs quickly mobilized to pass emergency laws to ensure access to food and allow food chains to function under COVID-19 restrictions.
- ▶ African parliamentarians implemented emergency measures to support food chains and access to food and productive resources, through direct aid payments, proposals for public health systems, funds for women entrepreneurs, support for youth and agricultural inputs for smallholder farmers.
- ▶ In the Dialogues, parliamentarians from Arab countries focused on economic and social challenges, land productivity, new technologies, capacity building, deforestation and, above all, water scarcity.
- ▶ Parliamentarians from Asia and the Pacific spoke of measures taken to support the most vulnerable and unemployed groups, and stressed that parliaments must support national

response and recovery initiatives, fostering technological and innovative solutions to boost sustainable development and responsible investment in food and agriculture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of coordinated legislation to ensure access to adequate food. Parliamentarians can play a crucial role as changemakers to address and mitigate the impact of COVID-19, as well as to promote FNS through national and regional legislation that contributes to building more equitable, inclusive and sustainable societies now and in the future.



OUTCOME DOCUMENT – GLOBAL DIALOGUE 2021

Parliamentarians from around 50 countries and 7 parliamentary networks attended the Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues on Food Security and Nutrition in the time of COVID-19, organized from March to September 2021 by FAO, with the collaboration of AECID. They renewed their commitment to place FNS at the top of national, regional and global political agendas and to continue taking swift and decisive action to address the impacts of this pandemic.

Through their legislative, budgetary, fiscal and other responsibilities, parliaments play a crucial role in strengthening initiatives to combat and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and ensure food security, nutrition, inclusion and poverty reduction. In these unprecedented times, their work is more important than ever.

The parliamentarians who met virtually in the Regional Dialogues leading up to the Global Dialogue reported on in this publication built on the commitments made in the Declaration of Parliamentarians at the Global Parliamentary Summit in Madrid in October 2018. They reaffirmed their commitment to upholding HRAF, including freedom from hunger and access to affordable and healthy diets. In the time of COVID-19, parliamentarians recognize the need for greater international, regional and national cooperation to push for legislative, policy and budgetary measures to help guarantee these rights for all people and ensure the achievement of SDG 2: Zero Hunger by 2030, leaving no one behind.

In their role as custodians of political commitments, parliamentarians showed their readiness to generate, nurture and strengthen the political will needed to rebuild and ensure that the recovery of COVID-19 puts all countries on track to meet the SDGs by 2030. In the Regional Dialogues, and the Global Dialogue, parliamentarians reiterated their commitment to learn from each other's experiences, to build on the significant progress made, and to strengthen their partnership within and across countries and regions.

Parliamentarians will continually strive to encourage the adoption of laws, policies and programmes, as well as budget allocation and oversight, to improve and ensure sustainable access to healthy diets. This will be achieved by supporting FF and sustainable food production, as well as poverty reduction associated with gender inequalities, decent employment, responsible investments in agriculture and flexible social protection measures aimed at empowering the most vulnerable, as a means to achieve Zero Hunger and the SDGs.

Parliamentarians expressed their willingness to work in a cooperative, unbiased manner to develop legislative frameworks with international organizations, scientists, academics, consumer organizations, the private sector, family farmers and civil society. They pledged to work together to exchange and discuss best practices and legislative initiatives for access and affordability of healthy diets, optimal food labelling and incentives related to post-COVID-19 recovery.

FAO will continue to support parliamentarians by facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices, supporting the development of laws and public policies, providing technical information and capacity building, and facilitating linkages between parliamentarians and parliamentary bodies by opening up fora for dialogue and exchanges.

The parliamentarians and parliamentary networks that met virtually during the series of Dialogues played a pivotal role in one of the most challenging periods our generation has known. They overcame their differences to generate the political will to address the impact of the pandemic on agrifood systems and to protect the most vulnerable groups in our societies. They reaffirmed their commitment to sustain these efforts as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and determined that these experiences should be further discussed at a Second Global Parliamentary Summit, which will provide an opportunity to consolidate their work and progress further towards achieving the SDGs so that no one is left behind.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE VIRTUAL PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUES

The Parliamentary Dialogues carved out a political forum for discussing specific parliamentary initiatives and appropriate legal frameworks to ensure an enabling environment for FNS. These events also provided an opportunity to update parliamentary communities from different regions of the world on successful experiences and lessons learned in mitigating and building capacity to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition.

The Virtual Parliamentary Dialogues were held to:

1. foster policy discussion between parliamentarians and their networks on the key challenges facing Food Security and Nutrition in the time of COVID-19
2. contribute to regional parliamentary policy dialogue processes generated in the framework of the pandemic with a view to achieving SDG 2 and specific national parliamentary initiatives on the Right to Food to address the challenges of COVID-19.
3. enable mutual learning and knowledge sharing among parliamentarians through the dissemination of good practices and lessons learned to address and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on food security.
4. build the capacity of parliamentarians to address the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems.
5. strengthen the capacities of parliamentarians to promote appropriate legal frameworks to address food security and nutrition challenges in the midst of the COVID-19 emergency.

Why work with the parliamentary sector?

The parliamentary sector plays a key role as a driver of change in the promotion and development of FSN measures. This is even more important in the time of COVID-19. Parliamentarians are important because they can develop legislation within national and regional policy frameworks, approve public budget allocations, as well as ensure government accountability and oversight when political commitments are put into practice, taking into account the specific contexts and needs of their societies.

Main initiatives addressed by the regions during the sessions

- ▶ In Latin America and the Caribbean, the PFHs mobilized quickly to pass emergency laws, guarantee access to food and allow food chains to operate under COVID-19 restrictions.
- ▶ African parliamentarians deployed emergency measures to support food chains and access to food and productive resources, through direct aid payments, proposals for public health systems, funds for women entrepreneurs, support for youth and agricultural inputs for smallholder farmers.
- ▶ In the Dialogues, parliamentarians from Arab countries focused on economic challenges and social issues, land productivity, new technologies, training, deforestation and, above all, water scarcity.
- ▶ Parliamentarians from Asia and the Pacific spoke of measures that had been taken to support the most vulnerable and unemployed people, and stressed that parliaments must support national response and recovery initiatives.

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Other aspects to consider

- ▶ The gender perspective is crucial for ensuring HRAF. Achieving gender equality is no longer just another empty promise in the set of international human rights commitments made by countries, but has become a mandatory condition, without which it will be impossible to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and achieve the SDGs.
- ▶ Coordination among national powers is essential to strengthen the rule of law and counteract the negative effects left by COVID-19. It is vital to encourage partnerships between the executive and the legislature that harmonize their objectives and goals. This will strengthen the spirit of cooperation between national powers so that they can design medium- and long-term national public policies, unfettered by political or partisan constraints.
- ▶ There is a need to improve access to information, as well as to strengthen mechanisms for investing in and developing scientific knowledge. Agriculture has the potential to improve people's social and economic conditions, especially during times of crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ The creation of specialized national and regional institutions has great potential to strengthen and advance HRAF.
- ▶ The approval of specialized budgets to support FNS-related programmes, as well as for agriculture and food systems, is now an issue of general interest: it is a very useful tool to help civil society organizations, legislators and human rights commissions to advocate for the right to food, as the existence of a budget is the most tangible and objective way to measure a government's commitment to recognizing the right to food.

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