# EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Gabriele ZIMMER (GUE /NGL, DE) on an EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges, in response to the Commission communication on the same subject.

Members recall that the number of people suffering from hunger amounted to 925 million in 2010 according to the FAO and that hunger and malnutrition are the main causes of human mortality. The report notes that there has been a rise in food prices since August 2010, following a trend over the last ten years, with levels now higher than during the food price peak of 2008. The volatility of commodity prices is impacting greatly on low income countries and the poorest and most vulnerable and marginalised segments of the populations of developing countries.

Against this background, an **EU policy framework on food and nutrition security is necessary.**

Members welcome the Commission communication on an EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges. However, the EU and the Member States must, as a matter of urgency, make new investments in agriculture and rural development. The report states that the Commission should take greater account of the question of food security in some countries when calculating development aid.

Members express deep concerns about the negative effects of such mechanisms, especially on local economies. They emphasise that a sustainable development policy should be based on long-term and cooperation approaches. The report calls for more resources to be deployed in order to ensure the continuity of aid and for the debate to focus on the flexibility and complementarity of existing financial instruments.

Other more detailed actions are as follows:

- increase support in favour of sustainable smallholders;
- increase public investments in research for sustainable agro-ecological production systems that also improve the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural and rural sector;
- the need for a partnership approach with the whole range of development stakeholders on food security, in particular local and regional authorities and civil society organisations;
- the Commission, the Member States and other development aid donors, including NGOs, to target their investment more closely on the agricultural sector in order to provide local people with a reason not to move elsewhere;
- prioritise agriculture in its development aid, including assistance to farmers in accessing markets;
- involve local agricultural organisations and strengthen local associations, so as to ensure that the interests of local communities are protected.

Members agree that EU assistance programmes should focus on sustainable, primarily small- and medium- scale food production and on approaches that strengthen biodiversity, prevent the degradation of fertile land and promote low-external-input (LEI) practices while increasing agricultural output in developing countries.

The EU should contribute to promoting the use of seeds from local varieties which are adapted to climatic conditions in developing countries and which can be easily stored, traded and supplied to farmers, as they are free of intellectual property rights.

**More sustainable production**: Members consider, in view of the growing global population and increasing pressure on natural resources, that it is essential to establish more sustainable, energy-saving and efficient forms of production at world level. They demand that the allocation of aid by the EU and Member States be tied to the development of **sustainable and energy self-sufficient agricultural production systems**, and that a part of this aid contribute to the setting up of facilities for generating renewable energy (for example based on wind and sun) and good water management. The report stresses the need to give small farmers in developing countries **greater access to property rights**, allowing small land owners to prove ownership and as such posses collateral for the loans required to elevate their production.

**Food as a human right**: Members recall that agricultural development must be grounded in the right to food and the right to produce food. They stress in parallel the need for ensuring equal access of local populations to food in these countries. Current production capacities in some developing countries may not cover needs and that achieving long-term food security requires a reduction in import dependencies by building up these domestic capacities.

The Commission is called upon to: (i) draw up a specific Communication on the nutritional dimension into EU programmes; (ii) recognise the fundamental role of women, as smallholder farmers, in food and nutrition security; (iii) focus on the implementation of actions to ensure that the most vulnerable, especially in rural areas, can benefit from agriculture training opportunities, education on nutrition, good health and work conditions and a safety net if it is needed; (iv) continue their ongoing consultation processes with global civil society and non-state actors, in particular with farmers', fishermen's and breeders' organisations; (v) focus on under-nutrition, particularly maternal and infant under-nutrition, and to integrate sound and multi-sectoral nutrition strategies into its development policy; (vi) promote and work towards the implementation of innovative financial instruments, such as an **international tax on financial transactions**.

Members take the view that, in the light of FAO population projections indicating that, by 2025, more than half of the developing world's population (some 3.5 thousand million people) will be living in urban areas, a policy of support for **urban horticulture** could offer a pathway out of poverty, given the low start-up costs, short production cycles and high yields per unit of time, land and water, and could make the new cities greener.

**Effective measures against food price volatility and uncontrolled land acquisition**: Members draw attention to the structural causes of price volatility and strongly emphasise that speculation on derivatives of essential food commodities has significantly worsened price volatility. Regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure a degree of market stability.

In this context, the report proposes the following measures:

- fair remuneration for farmers;
- concrete action to effectively tackle financial speculation on grain and food;
- steps to restore world food stocks;
- better management and storage of physical grain and food reserves at national and regional level and a strengthening of international coordination and monitoring, thereby countering food price volatility and enabling a better and faster response to food crises;

- encourage governments of developing countries to commit to land reform in order to secure the land titles of indigenous farmers and small and medium farmers, especially women, and to prevent land-grabbing practices by corporations;
- adoption of the FAO voluntary guidelines on land acquisitions and ensuring their participatory implementation, but also calls for strict binding national and international regulations on land acquisitions;
- drawing up a code of conduct to urge investors to focus their efforts on raising agricultural productivity and improving the livelihoods of local communities;
- establishment of mechanisms which prevent the 'pricing out' of local farmers and their ability to produce food for local populations;
- maintaining effective conditions for agricultural production, including soil quality, water access and the prevention of environmental pollution.

**Policy Coherence for Development**: Members call for the freezing of EU energy strategy targets until further impact assessments have been undertaken. They believe that **food security should not be jeopardised by the development of agrofuels**. They call therefore for a balanced approach that gives priority to the new generation of agrofuels using farm and forestry waste (straw and other crop waste, animal manure, biogas, etc.) instead of food crops, to avoid a situation of competition between food and energy production. They urge the adoption of a **more global perspective** in the design of the CAP post-2013 which should adhere to the principle of 'do no harm' to food markets in developing countries.

Lastly, the Commission is called upon to:

- investigate the problem of food waste inside the EU, as up to 40 % of the available food, including food produced in developing countries and exported to the EU, is thought to be thrown in the dustbin, and to propose effective measures to tackle the problem and improve consumption patterns;
- phase-out export subsidies as well as for the removal of all other incentives in the CAP which result in trade-distorting measures;
- ensure that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is being respected in countries where the EU has Fisheries Partnership Agreements, especially regarding the recommendation to grant preferential access for local artisanal fishers to resources;
- bring about reforms that will expand market access opportunities for developing countries and allow them to perform competitively in their own national and regional markets;
- focus on development concerns in the ongoing EPA negotiations, broaden developing countries' room for manoeuvre with regard to trade rules and, in particular, apply safeguard clauses in order to achieve endogenous, sustainable development of economic capacity in developing countries;
- take a strong pro-development position in WTO negotiations;
- apply a human rights-based approach to international trade negotiations and to apply human rights impact assessments to agreements with third countries;
- support a needs-based convention in which the level of donors' food assistance commitments are linked to people's needs and guaranteed local purchase volumes in recipient countries.