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

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution 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. However, the World Bank estimates that growth in the agricultural sector is twice as effective at reducing poverty as growth in other sectors, but having regard also to the importance of investing in rural non-farm sector growth and job creation,

Parliament also recalls that 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, because** the number of people suffering from hunger is unacceptable. Parliament calls for urgent steps to be taken to fulfil internationally binding commitments and make the right to adequate and nutritious food a reality.

Whilst generally welcoming the Commission Communication, Parliament considers that the world food crisis represents, in addition to a humanitarian disaster on an unprecedented scale, a major threat to peace and security worldwide, and that, even though credit should be given to the Commission's commitment to seeking out solutions that could lift a billion people out of extreme poverty, the European Union and the Member States must, as a matter of urgency, make new investments in agriculture and rural development, above all in view of the new CAP text, introducing dedicated mechanisms for building sufficiently large world stocks of basic foodstuffs, removing their own barriers to trade, and reducing the debt of the countries most affected. The Commission should take greater account of the question of food security in some countries when calculating development aid and Member States should support the development of the implementation plan in support of the Food Security Policy Framework.

Recalling that emergency mechanisms must not be a long-term solution, Members call 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, particularly the development impact of its CAP reform proposals in order to improve coherence between the CAP and EU development policy objectives.

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;
- strengthen the vital role played by women, via on-the-spot processing and the widespread use of loans and microcredits;
- provide the necessary infrastructure, such as roads, market linkages and information on the markets themselves and on the scope for product diversification;
- strengthen education and training;
- involve local agricultural organisations and strengthen local associations.

Members agree that EU assistance programmes should focus 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 also 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, 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. Parliament calls on the Commission to support the development of agro-processing capacities in partner countries in order to reduce post-harvest losses, extend the shelf-life and preservation of food and develop better storage facilities.

Food as a human right: Parliament recalls that access to adequate food is a universal human right, and urges partner countries to implement the FAO voluntary guidelines on the right to food. It also recalls that agricultural development must be grounded in the right to food and the right to produce food. It underlines the EU commitment to gradually phase out export subsidies, in parallel with similar measures being taken by WTO partners, and stresses in parallel the need for ensuring equal access of local populations to food in these countries. Members note that 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**.

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, Members take the view that a policy of support for **urban horticulture** could offer a pathway out of poverty, given the low start-up costs. They also urge the EU to support the UN social protection floor initiative, which would help satisfy the basic food needs of impoverished populations.

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 resolution proposes the following measures:

- fair remuneration for farmers;
- concrete action effectively to tackle financial speculation on grain and food;
- steps to restore world food stocks and better management and storage of physical grain and food reserves at national and regional level
- improvedmarket transparency and clear identification of actors involved in the food trade and for an in-depth analysis of transmission mechanisms of speculation on food products on local and world markets;
- ensuring that local communities and institutions have the negotiating powers and capacities enabling them to develop local farming;
- 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.

Land use rights: Parliament expresses deep concern regarding the large-scale land acquisitions that are currently carried out by foreign investors in developing countries, which is also to the detriment of local smallholder and medium-scale farmers and to local, regional and national food security. It therefore calls on the EU to 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. It stresses that the land should be accessible to all and that it is necessary to protect the land, tenancy and land use rights of small local farmers and the access of local communities to natural resources, in order to prevent further land takeovers, as is already happening to an alarming extent in especially Africa. Members encourage the adoption of the FAO voluntary guidelines on land acquisitions.

Policy Coherence for Development: Parliament recalls that global demand for agricultural products is expected to increase by 70 % by 2050 which will need to be produced using less water and pesticides, with less agricultural land available and applying sustainable agro-ecological production methods, while the world's population is forecast to reach nine billion by then. ; whereas food insecurity is further exacerbated by speculation on commodities, land degradation, water scarcity, climate change, global land acquisitions and land tenure insecurity, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population, global seed monopolies, demands for agro-fuels and energy-related policies. Parliament believes that **food security should not be jeopardised by the development of agrofuels**. It calls 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. Members 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. Parliament reiterates concerns that the EU's trade strategy which sometimes fails to provide a pro-development approach, and calls therefore for fair and pro-development trade agreements, as they are an essential element of a global food security response.

Lastly, the Commission is called upon to:

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- 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;
- the complete phasing-out of export subsidies;
- 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 and apply a human rights-based approach to international trade negotiations;
- 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.