Addressing food security in developing countries

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The European Parliament adopted by 602 votes to 15, with 20 abstentions, a resolution on addressing food security in developing countries.

Parliament recalled that hunger and food insecurity are again increasing across the world (around 660 million people might continue to face hunger by 2030) and that it is highly unlikely that the nutritional targets will be met by 2025 or that hunger will be eradicated by 2030 which is the ambition by SDG2 ' **Zero Hunger**'.

Recalling that the right to food is a human right, Parliament called on the EU to safeguard developing countries' right to food and self-sufficiency as a means of achieving nutritional security, poverty reduction and inclusive, sustainable and fair global supply chains and more sustainable food systems, as well as supporting local and regional markets, with particular attention to women and family farming.

Members believe that **Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has further destabilised already fragile agricultural markets**, worsened the already serious situation caused by COVID-19 and put additional pressure on the ongoing food crises and global food security, pushing international food and feed prices well above their already high levels. This crisis risks increasing food insecurity, poverty and instability in many developing countries that are heavily dependent on Ukrainian and Russian wheat imports, as 40% of Ukraine's wheat and maize exports go to the Middle East and Africa.

The resolution stressed that governments should avoid export bans in this context and identify measures to support the restructuring of agricultural markets by increasing their transparency and establishing new rules to prevent excessive financial speculation from fuelling food price volatility, which, especially in a context of war, can artificially inflate wholesale prices and lead to market volatility, with particular repercussions on developing countries and the most vulnerable populations.

Parliament called on the EU to prioritise food and sustainable agriculture in its international development programming and to ensure access to funding for local communities and organisations. Given the great diversity of food systems, measures should be country-driven, needs-based and context-specific. **Priority should be given to local food production** through financing smallholders, protecting human rights, strengthening family farming systems, cooperatives and regional supply chains. **Prioritising maternal and infant nutrition** needs is also essential for solid and resilient food security.

The resolution encouraged developing countries' transition to greater self-sufficiency, giving farmers responsibility, ownership and independence in creating sustainable agri-food systems and more self-sufficient production systems.

Building resilience to future shocks

Members believe that building resilience must respond to the increasing frequency and intensity of conflicts and natural disasters, including droughts, cyclones and floods, as well as health crises, biodiversity loss, structural inequalities and economic shocks, which often have multiple impacts on the most vulnerable.

Parliament called on the EU to, inter alia:

- promote predictable, specific and targeted funding for preventive and anticipatory action to prevent food insecurity, mitigate its effects and increase attention and funding for locally driven resilience and adaptation;

- strengthen **livelihoods programmes** to support food security and to ensure people's capacity to generate and sustain their livelihoods and improve their own and future generations' well-being;

- protect **small-scale producers'** access to and control over land and other resources, including farmers' seeds, and the infrastructure that links rural people to territorial markets, including urban areas;

- design **food waste prevention programmes** that include the development of short food supply chains, which reduce the risk of food waste;

- ensure that **food production** takes priority over agricultural biofuel production, with the aim of securing additional food supplies and stabilising global food commodity markets;

- contribute, through development assistance, to combating the discrimination faced by women, particularly with regard to women farmers' access to land, productive resources and financial services;

- assisting partner countries in adopting **sustainable agricultural practices** and innovative solutions to improve their resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Parliament called for the **full integration of the humanitarian-development- peace nexus approach** in security strategies in third countries.

A complementary EU humanitarian and development policy response

Parliament recalled that **humanitarian aid should be stepped up** in countries affected by food crises or conflicts. It condemned any actions where access to food is used as a tool of oppression or a weapon of war. Members recalled that Ukraine and Russia account for almost 30% of world trade in wheat, 32% in barley, 17% in maize, over 50% in sunflower oil and 20% in sunflower seeds. They pointed out that the reduction or loss of Ukrainian exports will affect countries heavily reliant on their production, including countries already experiencing food insecurity that are vulnerable to supply shocks and price increases, as in the case of Africa. They called on the Commission and the Member States to urgently assess all available means to avoid a default in the balance of payments of food importer countries.

The Commission is asked to ensure the development of a **multi-sectoral nutrition strategy** and to prioritise the integration of food security and nutrition into health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, in order to ensure that at least 20% of official development assistance under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe is dedicated to social inclusion and human development.

Members called for **nutrition to be integrated into universal health coverage** and called on the European Commission to (i) integrate the right to water and the development of water and sanitation infrastructure into its interventions for food security in developing countries; (ii) integrate fisheries and aquaculture products when adopting food security strategies.