

# Food security:

understanding and meeting  
the challenge of poverty



EuropeAid



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

**European Commission**  
**EuropeAid Cooperation Office**  
**Rue de la Loi 41, B-1049 Brussels**  
**Fax: (32-2) 299 64 07**  
**E-mail: europeaid-info@ec.europa.eu**

**Internet sites:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/world>  
<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid>  
<http://ec.europa.eu/development>  
[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations)

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Myanmar (p.23): Angela Schwarz, Welthungerhilfe  
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Burkina Faso (p.25) Amadou Hebie, EC

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# Table of contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
1 The various aspects of food security	7
What do we mean by “food security”?	7
Food insecurity	8
Understanding more clearly certain notions inherent to food security	11
2 Food security: European Commission policies and actions	13
New challenges, new strategies	13
A vast range of instruments	15
Managing the transition between humanitarian action and development aid: LRRD	17
3 Tomorrow’s challenges: eradicating food insecurity and combating poverty	18
A global approach to national development policies	18
Reviving agriculture and rural development	18
The role of social transfers	19
Strengthening the fight against malnutrition	19
Information for action	20
4 Examples from the field	21
Central America: Meeting the challenge at regional level	22
Myanmar: Food security among displaced populations	23
Ethiopia: Safety net for thousands of rural families	24
Burkina Faso: Ensuring self-sufficiency among small producers	25

# Foreword



**Koos Richelle**  
**Director-General**

One in five people today suffer from hunger and malnutrition, the effects of which on the physical and mental growth of those affected can be irreversible in some cases. Not only is hunger morally unacceptable, but it also acts as a brake on economic and human development in the poorest countries.

Having already taken a dramatic turn, this situation has deteriorated further on the back of the combined impact of recent food emergencies and economic crises as well as climate change. In the face of this unprecedented situation, the Commission moved swiftly to step up its anti-poverty efforts: in addition to pre-existing instruments, since 2008 it has also mobilised in excess of 1.25 billion euro extra for the worst affected populations.

This is the background against which EuropeAid has produced this brochure, as a way of illustrating how the Commission supports agricultural production and access to food and also prevents malnutrition in around 80 countries.

After a brief reminder of the fundamental causes of hunger, the brochure presents the wide range of instruments at the Commission's disposal for responding to food insecurity. The final two parts describe the types of intervention that are being implemented and provide an overview of the actual programmes supported by EuropeAid on the ground.

These actions further boost the importance attached to food insecurity as part of European aid efforts for developing countries. In accordance with the Commission's commitments, our goal is for these efforts, coordinated with those being pursued by other sponsors, to contribute effectively to meeting the challenge of extreme poverty.

# Introduction

## New causes of food insecurity

In 2008, soaring farm product prices adversely affected the whole of the world's population and aggravated the vulnerability of the poorest countries<sup>1</sup>.

Analysis of this crisis has highlighted the new trends impacting on food security. The world actually faces a new conjunction of several factors with a cumulative effect bearing little relation to the causes of the major food crises at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, particularly in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

### The new factors include:

- declining world food stocks
- price volatility in the food and energy markets
- demographic growth
- changing food habits (linked to economic development in emerging countries and the embracing of new forms of consumption)
- urban growth
- the boom in biofuels
- climate changes that affect production
- above all, the links between the financial markets and speculation within agricultural futures markets.

These factors all have a bearing in both the short and long terms and heighten the danger of populations slipping into poverty. The increased volatility in agricultural markets has laid bare the acute vulnerability of the poorest to the slightest additional shock, e.g. sudden price rises, poor harvests, climate uncertainties.

The drop in agriculture's share of public development aid and its lower ranking in the priorities of developing countries have served to exacerbate the situation.

However, the price explosions which took place in 2008 propelled food security back to the top of people's concerns.

The global recession has highlighted the fact that hunger is not necessarily caused by a shortage of food and that food security is not simply linked to the capacity to produce foods in sufficient quantities.

It is important to boost agricultural supply in the face of the structural rise in demand. However, food insecurity is also and above all the result of problems of physical access for populations to foods and other essential products. In other words, it arises when populations are too poor to cover their basic needs and do not have the means to access either markets or distribution networks.

In order to meet the challenge of food security, new and more robust global partnerships are needed today between donors, international institutions, the governments of developing countries, civil society and the private sector.

## The European Commission and the fight against food insecurity

The European Commission's development policy, which focuses more broadly on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), places food security at the heart of the fight against poverty. It links together food security with rural and agricultural development, the sustainable management of natural resources, health (including access to water), infrastructures and households economy (social transfers).

<sup>1</sup> Some of the worst rioting took place in Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Haiti, Madagascar and the Philippines.

### The challenge of food security in development: the fight against poverty

The OECD defines poverty as a state which “encompasses different aspects of deprivation that relate to human capabilities including consumption and food security, health, education, rights, voice, security, dignity and decent work”. Similarly hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity are preventing destitute populations from escaping poverty, because they reduce their capacities to study, work and take care of themselves and their families.

The development of the poorest countries will remain an unachievable goal for as long as hunger and malnutrition remain, because they place a direct strain on the economic and human potential of these countries, often from one generation to another. Development necessarily implies improving the situation in terms of food security, which is vital in order to combat poverty.



# The various aspects of food security



## What do we mean by food security?

Food security exists – at the individual, family, national and global levels –when all people at all times have physical and economic access to enough safe and nutritious food in order to cover their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Rome Declaration, 1996).

It would be a mistake to confine food security to the issue of “raw” production, because it also involves access to food and the correct use of it. Moreover, it extends beyond the simple notion of self-sufficiency.

Food security is a multidisciplinary concept which includes economic, political, demographic, social (discriminatory food access), cultural (eating habits) and technical aspects. Making food security a reality therefore also implies to take into consideration the role of non-food factors.

## Food security is built on four pillars:

- The physical **availability** of food for everyone. This involves offering enough foodstuffs to meet everyone's needs through national farm production, distribution and imports, as well as adequate local and national policies in these sectors;
- Economic and physical **access** to food, basic needs (health, education, etc.) and adequate resources. This involves stable markets, affordable prices for local populations, decent incomes and adequate purchasing power, thus enabling households to cover their food needs. The paradox with food insecurity is that it involves less a global insufficiency in terms of the quantity of food produced, but rather a problem of access. Insecurity can occur even in regions which have experienced high economic growth if market prices are too high for vulnerable households. Similarly when countries have sufficient food stocks the precariousness – or even absence – of transport networks may prevent food from being delivered in certain deficit zones;







- The **utilisation** of food and of related resources (drinking water, drainage, healthcare). This involves supplying an adequate and balanced diet in a way that satisfies the physiological needs (nutrition) of populations and enables people to lead healthy and active lives. Using food appropriately presupposes a nutritional balance and an adequate supply of micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, etc.);
- The **stability** of food supply over time (short/medium/long term). This should guarantee that access to food is safe from either the emergence of sudden shocks (economic or climate crisis) or cyclical events (seasonal food insecurity).

## Myths and realities

Is the planet facing a food shortage?	The world today theoretically produces enough food for everyone to have the foods they need in order to lead a healthy and productive life.
Who are the victims of hunger?	Despite the image conveyed by the media, fewer than 8% of the people affected by hunger are victims of food emergencies. The world's 963 million inhabitants who are hungry rarely make the headlines. Nevertheless there are more of them today than there are people living in the United States, Japan and the European Union combined. Children, women and rural communities are the first to fall victim to hunger.
Where are they concentrated?	Around three-quarters of the people affected by hunger live in the poor rural zones of developing countries. However, the percentage of undernourished people is increasing in urban areas.
What is the importance of micronutrients?	Deficiencies in micronutrients – vitamins and minerals – are very important and affect around two billion people around the world. According to the World Health Organisation, deficiencies in iron, vitamin A and zinc rank among the 10 leading causes of mortality through illness in developing countries.

Adapted from the WFP's FAQs: <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/faqs>

## Food insecurity

Food insecurity is a dynamic phenomenon: its impact varies depending on its **duration**, its **severity**, and the local socioeconomic and environmental conditions (natural, institutional, cultural).

The *duration* refers to a varying length of time during which individuals are affected by food insecurity.

The degree of *severity* is reflected in the compromises vulnerable families make based on the available resources, when a crisis forces them to sacrifice the quality and/or quantity of foods. This reduction entails a progressive decrease in dietary intake.

Food security is a long-term issue. In contrast, food insecurity can have immediate catastrophic consequences.



## Notions not to be confused

**Food security** should be differentiated from the notions of food aid, food safety and food sovereignty with which it is often confused.

**Food assistance** is a rapid and specific response mechanism used during a humanitarian crisis or disaster. Its purpose is to provide populations with adequate food and attempt to re-establish food security for affected people in specific contexts.

**Food safety** (often called “food security” in Europe) involves the regulation and control of food supply chains in order to monitor food hygiene, toxicity and traceability.

**Food sovereignty** concerns the right of States to implement the most appropriate agricultural policies for their populations, provided that they do not harm agriculture in other countries.

## Causes of food insecurity

The causes of food insecurity are both temporary and structural.

### *Chronic food insecurity*

Poverty, insufficient access to health and education services, as well as poor governance, are the main causes of chronic food insecurity.

The majority of the billion people affected by hunger live in rural areas. The rural poor (e.g. small farmers, landless farm labourers) are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. They suffer from unequal access to financial and productive resources and markets as well as from international trade imbalances.

Urban growth limits food resources, increases demand and accentuates income inequalities. It therefore impacts negatively on food security among poor urban populations.

Finally, environmental damage, climate change and the mismanagement of natural resources are further causes of chronic food insecurity (desertification, unstable ecosystems).

### *Transitory food insecurity*

Transitory insecurity occurs when populations are temporarily unable of meeting their food needs, for example because of unexpected or seasonal events. Food insecurity results from stresses (natural disasters, wars, income variations, price volatility) and from short/medium-term changes affecting food availability and access to food.

## A vicious circle

Hunger, malnutrition and poverty are closely linked to food insecurity.

If poverty is a cause of hunger, malnutrition can be a cause of poverty since it may reduce people's mental and physical capacities; moreover, by often having knock-on effects between generations it can decrease a population's economic potential.

**Above and beyond the human cost, malnutrition also has a definite economic cost. It is responsible for a 2 to 3% loss of GDP in poor countries and for a 22% drop in annual income among adults<sup>2</sup>.**

Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity therefore prevent destitute populations from escaping poverty since they lower people's capacities to study, work and take care of themselves and their families.

Ultimately, human capital in society as a whole is affected.

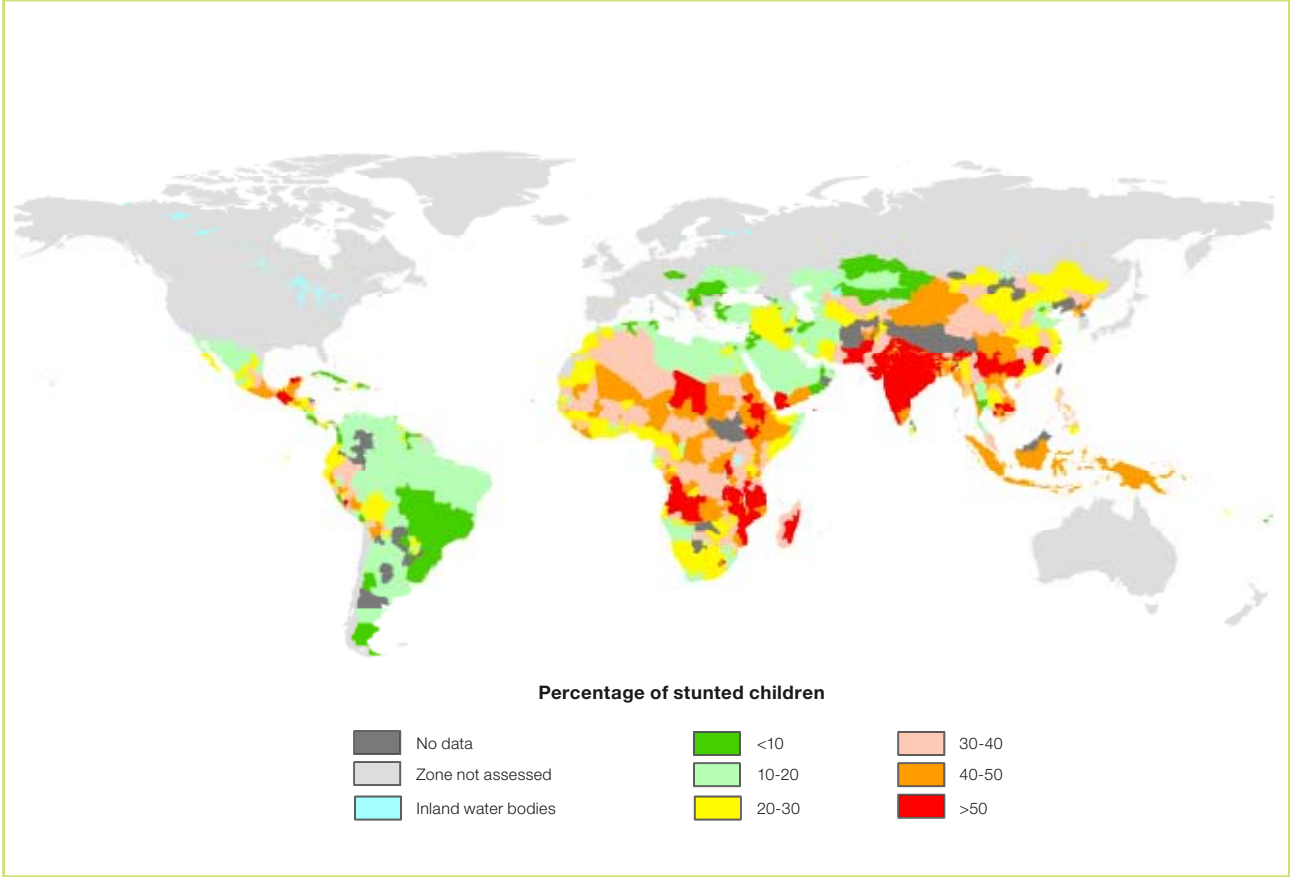
## Victims of food insecurity

Some populations are more vulnerable than others. Food insecurity particularly affects the victims of war, marginal populations in urban areas, and households on low incomes or dependent on precarious livelihoods. Within these categories, women and people living on their own or in low-income families are the worst affected.

<sup>2</sup> 'Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development', World Bank, 2006.



*Prevalence of stunting among children under five, by lowest available subnational administrative unit, varying ages (FAO)*





## **Understanding more clearly certain notions inherent to food security**

### **Food crisis/stress**

The notion of food crisis should be set apart from that of food stress.

A food crisis is a specific event of limited duration. It has political overtones linked to variable appreciations of the gravity of a situation or shortage, real or artificial, and its repercussions.

The notion of food stress applies whenever households fall below the vulnerability threshold, defined on the basis of food availability and people's ability to access food. Families may also have to reduce the number and quality of meals or even cut health expenditure.

They may also be forced either to consume their food stocks or sell part of their means of production – thereby adversely affecting their living conditions and future food security in the long term.

### **Stability/structural resilience and vulnerability**

*Resilience* denotes the capacity of populations to maintain a level of well-being when faced with food stress by resorting to adapted survival and risk management strategies.

In contrast, *vulnerability* is defined as the risk facing households – even when they manage to maintain an acceptable standard of living in the present – of falling into poverty at any time and being unable to cope with possible future causes of food insecurity.

Resilience and vulnerability depend therefore on the adaptation and reaction mechanisms implemented in response to a difficult situation. Whenever these mechanisms prove ineffective, the population enters a situation of chronic vulnerability.

In regions regarded as relatively “affluent”, populations may appear more vulnerable to food insecurity than populations from difficult regions accustomed to regular one-off shocks. A detailed analysis is necessary in order to identify these populations.

### **Various forms of malnutrition**

Malnutrition is the result of a poor or inadequate diet which does not provide the necessary nutritional intake, in both quality and quantity. It may also be linked to common infectious diseases like diarrhoea.

*Chronic malnutrition* is revealed by stunting, which is measured in terms of the ratio of size to age. It occurs whenever the diet of children is chronically inadequate or when children regularly fall ill. Chronic malnutrition can have irreversible effects on a child's future development, heightens the vulnerability of populations and weakens their capacity to cope with episodes of food stress.

*Acute malnutrition* arises when a child's weight is too low for his or her size (wasting) and significantly increases the mortality risk. It occurs whenever children lose weight as a result of severe nutritional deficiencies in the short term. A high rate of acute malnutrition reflects a food consumption shock (e.g. poor harvest, war, drought, epidemic) and/or the appearance of a disease. Emergency projects focus on acute malnutrition among children under five years old. Nowadays its most deadly form (known as severe acute malnutrition) can be treated with the help of therapeutic care and foods.



Malnutrition's long-term effects on the child population, and therefore on future generations, hamper a country's development capacity. Malnutrition therefore represents one of the most serious checks on economic development and undermines part of the development efforts undertaken.

### Malnutrition in figures<sup>3</sup>

Malnutrition is by far the *leading risk factor facing children under five years old*. Each year it kills 3.4 million of them – by way of comparison one million children die each year from malaria.

At present 32% of children under five years old in low/middle-income countries suffer from *chronic malnutrition*.

10% of children under five years old suffer from acute malnutrition. Of these, 3.5% suffer from **severe acute malnutrition**, which is often the criterion used in order to decide emergency responses.

Around 90% of the 178 million people who suffer from malnutrition live in 20% of the countries affected by this phenomenon, e.g. Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Niger, Burundi, India, Cambodia.

### *The importance of good resources management*

Environmental preservation, good management of natural resources (guaranteeing universal access to land, water and resources; respecting biodiversity) and trade policies that meet local needs, along with sustainable agricultural development, contribute to improving food security.

### *The right to food*

The right to food is a human right inherent to all people. It encompasses the right to an adequate diet and the fundamental right to be safe from hunger. The former covers the medium and long term, while the latter relates to the short term.

The right to food complements and reinforces food security through a legal dimension and its reference to fundamental rights. This concept makes States responsible for ensuring the enforcement of this right and its gradual achievement for all people living within their borders.

3 'Lancet Series - Maternal and Child Undernutrition', The Lancet, 2008



# Food security: European Commission policies and actions



## *New challenges, new strategies*

### *Historical background*

For several years the European Commission has been a prominent international actor in terms of food security. Its policy has evolved over the years: from simple food aid distribution primarily using Community stocks of agricultural surpluses<sup>4</sup> to food security support strategies at the national, regional and world levels.

This change, which is based on the principle of untying aid<sup>5</sup>, aims to:

- prioritise local or triangular purchases as much as possible in developing countries (buying foodstuffs in the regions where production is in surplus in order then to distribute the food in regions affected by shortages);
- promote local production and trade;
- encourage the integration of regional trade between developing countries.

From 1996 to 2006 Europe's policy on food security was reformed extensively and implemented through the **food aid and food security budget line (FSBL)**.

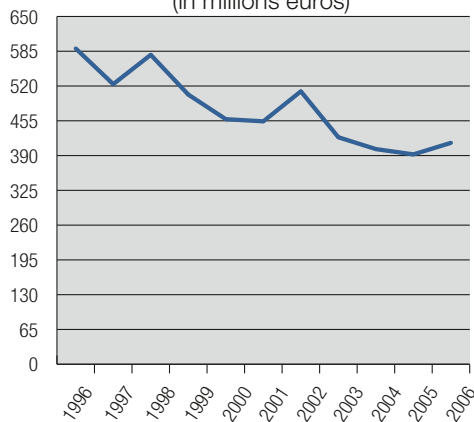
This budget line provided a single instrument that combined emergency and development operations and the three fundamental pillars of food security. It earmarked 500 million euro a year (on average) for national programmes, multilateral initiatives and local and international NGOs – major partners within this mechanism.

<sup>4</sup> Food aid ceased to be linked to European surpluses in 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to aid awarded on the condition that the beneficiary uses it to buy goods and services from suppliers located in the donor country. The untying of aid opens up the markets concerned to suppliers who are not solely found in the donor country.



Evolution of FSBL funding, 1996 to 2006  
(in millions euros)



### New orientations since 2007: a global vision

During the reform of Community external aid within the framework of the financial perspectives 2007-2013, the food aid and food security budget line (FSBL) was replaced by the **food security thematic programme (FSTP)**.

This new instrument is designed to consolidate the means for the Commission to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the first of these, namely the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty around the world.

The FSTP was devised to promote global, continental and regional responses. Its other mandate, on top of the traditional instruments dedicated to the various regions, is to assist countries that face temporary or structural food security problems linked to poverty.

Its budget for the period 2007-2010 is worth just over 925 million euro. This amount does not include funding for humanitarian food assistance that now comes under the responsibility of ECHO<sup>6</sup> within the European Commission.

The European Commission is working with different food security actors, in particular:

- governments in the partner countries;
- traditional multilateral partners, responsible primarily for the strategic aspects of programme implementation, e.g. FAO<sup>7</sup>, WFP<sup>8</sup>, IFAD<sup>9</sup>, World Bank, UNDP<sup>10</sup> and the Red Cross;
- non-governmental actors from civil society (e.g. NGOs, networks);
- other donors, including the EU's member countries plus the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, etc.;
- regional and continental intergovernmental organisations like ECWAS<sup>11</sup>, the African Union and the ASEAN<sup>12</sup>.

### Aims of the new policy

The actions implemented by the FSTP for the period 2007-2010 aim to:

1. support research (chiefly agricultural) and technological innovations contributing to food security;
2. strengthen the link between information production and decision-making, in order to improve strategies for the fight against food insecurity;
3. take advantage of continental and regional approaches to improve food security (reduction of disaster risk, development and harmonisation of agricultural policies, sustainable management of natural resources, etc.);

6 ECHO – the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department.

7 Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

8 World Food Programme.

9 International Fund for Agricultural Development.

10 United Nations Development Programme.

11 Economic Community of West African States.

12 Association of Southeast Asian Nations.





4. react to food insecurity in exceptional transitional situations and in fragile and failed States (LRRD) where conventional instruments are ineffective;

5. promote innovation by encouraging innovative food security practices and approaches and their exploitation and dissemination among developing countries;

6. encourage the promotion and implementation of food security strategies in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration<sup>13</sup>.

#### *Food security at the heart of development policy*

Food security is one of the priorities of European policy for development and the fight against poverty. It is the subject of a global strategy that takes into consideration all the sectors involved, and is characterised by the integrated use of the different co-operation instruments in the field of food security.

Strictly national programmes, financed previously by the FSBL, are now mainly under the responsibility of the geographical instruments. Humanitarian food assistance is managed by ECHO. The food security thematic programme co-ordinates these various instruments and covers all regional, continental and global aspects.

## ***A vast range of instruments***

Alongside the FSTP, other instruments are helping to fund the European Commission's food security actions around the world in the short, medium and long terms.

#### *Humanitarian food assistance: a short-term response tool*

The humanitarian food assistance, carried out by ECHO, is deployed in countries in the grip of a crisis or post-crisis situation. It requires immediate mobilisation in order to improve the nutrition situation, restore the basic livelihoods and re-establish food security. A vast array of tools is used for the purpose of achieving these goals, e.g. nutrition monitoring, screening and treatment, the restoration of access to inputs and services for agriculture and livestock rearing, the provision of supplies, and vouchers or cash for affected populations to ensure that they have access to food.

<sup>13</sup> The Paris Declaration is an international agreement adopted in 2005 by "DCD-CAD" (Development Co-operation Directorate of the OECD) donor and beneficiary countries with a view to the improved efficiency and better management of development aid.



### Medium/long-term response tools

The European Commission has a range of instruments for funding various types of food security operations over varying periods in the short, medium and long terms. Their diversity makes it possible to respond flexibly and adequately to needs.

*The European Development Fund (EDF)* is the main financial instrument for providing Community development aid in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) which have signed the Cotonou Agreement. This long-term aid programme funds national/regional and horizontal programmes.

*The Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI)* operates geographically (Latin America, Central Asia, etc.), but also funds thematic and transversal programmes (FSTP, human rights, environment, etc.). It also covers a programme of subsidies for NGOs, including those intervening in food security and rural development.

*The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instruments (ENPI)* cover countries adjacent to the European Union to the south and east (North Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East).

*The Instrument for Stability*<sup>14</sup> finances short-term and medium-term food security programmes and is implemented by the Directorate-General for External Relations (DG RELEX). It contributes to maintaining and restoring stability in the world. As a result, it is able to play a part in consolidating food security in a given country.

These various instruments can finance a host of responses (cf. text box).

### Examples of responses in support of food security

- Social safety net programmes, designed to meet the basic food needs of the most vulnerable populations (food aid and subsidies, cash transfers, etc.).
- Support for information systems and crisis prevention and mitigation.
- Implementation of national crisis prevention and management mechanisms. Development of programmes of institutionalised social transfers in support of the most vulnerable groups: children, communities victim of armed conflicts, women, small farmers threatened by food insecurity, landless casual labourers, very poor households in urban areas, etc.
- Support for local production through the provision of inputs (seed, fertiliser), agricultural equipment and livestock for smallholders.
- Programmes for rural and agricultural development and also for consolidating production capacities: microcredit, equipment, infrastructures, occupational training, support for agricultural organisations. These actions, inter alia, are part of the restructuring of supply chains (in particular, product commercialisation and inputs) and eliminating oligopolies and barriers to national and regional trade.
- Programmes to combat malnutrition (promotion of adequate food practices, adequate health and sanitation services, etc.).
- Programmes providing generic or sector-specific budget support: They are aimed at supporting sector reforms and the new policies of countries which have earmarked food security and/or rural development as priority goals.

<sup>14</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006 of the Parliament and of the Council of 12 November 2006 establishing an Instrument for Stability.



### A specific EU response to food price instability

For a person living on less than one dollar a day and devoting the bulk of his or her income to food, price rises like those in 2008 are quite simply unbearable. In order to help developing countries cope with these sharp rises, the European Union in December 2008 adopted a **facility for rapid responses to food price volatility**.

Endowed with one billion euro for the period 2008-2010<sup>15</sup>, the facility actively complements other funding instruments.

It aims to support an increase in the agricultural supply in developing countries, chiefly by improving access for smallholders to inputs (fertiliser, seeds) and to agricultural services, and also to alleviate the negative effects of food price volatility on local populations via social transfers for the poorest people. Halfway between emergency aid and medium/long-term development cooperation, the aid is focused on priority target countries.

### **Managing the transition between humanitarian action and development aid: LRRD** (linking relief, rehabilitation and development)

In countries confronted by emergency situations for many years, or seen as politically, economically or naturally 'high-risk', co-ordination on designing and implementing emergency, rehabilitation and development policies is essential. This strategic co-ordination should ensure that actions allowing direct access to food and basic social services for affected populations – as well as projects

and programmes aimed at institutional consolidation and the implementation of a framework conducive to development – complement one another.

While respecting the specificities of each actor, this approach, which combines actions in the short, medium and long terms, favours a joint analysis of precarious situations and needs on every level (social, political, technical, development). It therefore encourages vital synergies and harmonised responses to crises and transitional situations.

In other words, LRRD makes it possible to rethink crisis responses on the basis of a specific analysis of each context, thus allowing to take into consideration immediate needs in the short term as well as more long-term aspects, in order to avert future crises by strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations.

### From emergencies to sustainable development: the role of LRRD

LRRD-style responses to food insecurity situations are designed to ensure all at once the continuity, simultaneousness and effectiveness of humanitarian and development operations. They combine short-term and long-term actions within a perspective of the sustainable development of a region or a country.

Three key response components are identifiable, with the implementation of specific operations:

- Save lives and respond to essential needs.
- Protect and restore livelihoods.
- Develop the means of livelihoods in order to strengthen households' capacity to cope with shocks and trigger a sustainable development mechanism.

<sup>15</sup> Transferred from the external aid budget and derived in part from an increase in the ceiling on available resources.



# Tomorrow's challenges: eradicating food insecurity and combating poverty



## ***A global approach to national development policies***

The fight against food insecurity is a priority goal of poverty reduction policies. It involves a global and multidisciplinary approach over the long term. As a result, food security policies and strategies have to take into consideration all the sectors involved: agricultural production, access to production resources, trade, income, employment, health, education, food quality and water sanitation, governance and political stability.

## ***Reviving agriculture and rural development***

The world today has grasped the absolute necessity of reviving agriculture in order to combat food insecurity and poverty.

Even though most countries face growing urbanisation, in the less advanced countries and regions agricultural growth, thanks to its multiplier effect on the rest of the economy, will enable it, more than any other sector, to roll back poverty on a sustained basis.

Reviving agriculture implies the implementation of adequate measures for improving the productivity of food crops and encouraging smallholders to start growing crops with greater value added: horticulture, poultry farming, aquaculture, etc. To bring about lasting reductions in poverty, it is vital to set in train a process of transformation and economic diversification of livelihoods.





Furthermore, a significant proportion of the world's food shortages could be eased by improving local agricultural distribution networks and access to production factors for smallholders. Reviving agriculture means investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation, storage installations, services for farmers and agricultural markets. Finally, it is above all a matter of implementing ambitious policies for agricultural and rural development and of reducing the institutional or legal constraints which sometimes severely hamper any rise in production. Doing so means securing land ownership and access to land, encouraging the setting-up of producers' organisations and the development of effective and transparent marketing circuits as well as a suitable commercial framework.

At the European level, the rural development sector received a sharp increase in funding with the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF.

## ***The role of social transfers***

Social transfers make a tangible contribution to the Millennium goals (primarily MDG 1) by reconciling direct and targeted support for vulnerable populations.

These social safety nets are designed to promote better management of unexpected shocks and, in the longer term, reduce chronic poverty. In practical terms they can be defined as regular services or contributions provided by governments or other institutions (NGOs, etc.) for the most vulnerable individuals or households. Such transfers boost the resources of households, for example via the distribution of food, money or vouchers. Distribution may take place either directly or in exchange for community work, participation in a health programme or training.

Social transfers like these allow households to cover their immediate food needs, not to mention other essential items of expenditure such as health and education. Unlike emergency interventions, these transfers can be scheduled, which enables households to keep hold of their possessions and production tools (e.g. animals, implements, land) during difficult periods (lengthy spells between harvests, crop failure), making it possible ultimately to reinforce and stimulate the local economy.

## ***Strengthening the fight against malnutrition***

Reducing undernutrition would make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and ending the vicious circle that connects the two. Nevertheless, donors and developing countries alike often tend to neglect this vital aspect. The question then arises of knowing how to maximise the impact of food security responses and programmes on nutrition: targeted goals, appropriate indicators, tackling the multiple underlying causes. Specific attention should be paid to women (particularly pregnant women and young mothers) and to young children – the first victims of malnutrition.

It is vital not to isolate the problem by removing it from its context or by neglecting the other aspects which influence malnutrition: poverty and low incomes, access to drinking water, hygiene, access to healthcare, medicines, education, etc.

The humanitarian aid department (ECHO) has always attached a high priority to the fight against acute malnutrition. The Commission is now committed to a strategic approach that takes better account of nutrition in its own responses in development contexts.





## Information for action

High-quality information is vital for pursuing effective food security strategies. It enables decision-makers to identify the populations most exposed to food insecurity and to understand its nature and causes. On the ground, improving access for smallholders to well targeted information clearly has an important influence in advancing local agriculture.

Diversification and the increasing complexity of food emergencies today demand increasingly effective information and early-warning mechanisms.

Greater allowance for food security at the political level now calls for the consolidation of information and early-warning systems in order to guarantee reliable, well-exploited information that enables fast and effective decision-making, the right policies and programmes to be designed and appropriate responses to be planned.

Lastly, networks allow data to be shared and also compared more effectively. It also allows the various national actors concerned to become more widely involved (producers, processors, traders, consumers, etc.).

## Operational food security network



# Examples from the field



## **Central America: Meeting the challenge at the regional level**

**“ I was lucky enough to take part in two initiatives: water management, and food and nutrition security. I learned a great deal from these two experiences and we are now waiting for harvest time. ”**

A community leader talking about SAN Integral initiatives  
Municipality of Tacaná, San Marcos, Guatemala.



## **Myanmar: Food security for displaced populations**

**“ We didn’t think we could produce anything from these tiny rice seeds, but they are stronger today and more productive than our traditional rice fields. ”**

Beneficiary, food security project *Welthungerhilfe*

## **Ethiopia: Safety net for thousands of rural families**

**“ Thanks to the safety net programme I don’t have to sell my goat in order to eat. The Government gives me a helping hand to enable me to have enough to eat. ”**

PSNP beneficiary in the “woreda” at Chiro, Oromia region.



## **Burkina Faso: Ensuring self-sufficiency among small producers**

**“ The enriched porridge made it possible to save my malnourished child. ”**

Woman speaking during a visit to the nutrition training and education centre in the village of Kourpellé in 2007.

# Central America

## Meeting the challenge at the regional level

In Central America, food and nutrition insecurity and poverty, which are very widespread, are hampering the region's development process. The severity of food emergencies and the vulnerability of populations have increased with the emergence of political conflicts, violence and natural disasters.



**“ I was lucky enough to take part in two initiatives: water management, and food and nutrition security. I learned a great deal from these two experiences and we are now waiting for harvest time. ”**

A community leader talking about SAN Integral initiatives  
Municipality of Tacaná, San Marcos, Guatemala.

### NAME OF ACTION

Regional Programme for Food Security and Nutrition in Central America (PRESANCA)

### IMPLEMENTATION

Central American Integration System and the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP)

### DURATION

2004-2010

### COVERAGE

24 municipalities located along the borders of Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua

The programme has made it possible to fight food insecurity through a series of firm initiatives:

- construction of networks to provide drinking water
- cereal production to cover families' food needs
- backing for the creation of kitchen gardens and support for stock farming

These actions reduce food insecurity in the most vulnerable communities located in border zones.

# Myanmar

## Food security for displaced populations

Years of violent conflicts and repression have seriously undermined food security, already adversely affected by the country's shortage of farmland for cultivation and its mountainous terrain. Moreover, the local authorities, confronted with drug trafficking, have adopted a policy of forcibly displacing villages in order to curtail the intensive cultivation of opium poppies. The displaced populations have been re-accommodated in neighbouring villages, which are experiencing problems with food insecurity and have seen a decline in their own living conditions.



**“ We didn’t think we could produce anything from these tiny rice seeds, but they are stronger today and more productive than our traditional rice fields. ”**

Beneficiary, food security project *Welthungerhilfe*

### NAME OF ACTION

Improved Food and Livelihood Security for Displaced Ethnic Minority Villages in Former Poppy-growing Areas of Wa Region, Shan State

### PARTNERS

*Welthungerhilfe* (German NGO)

### DURATION

2005-2009

### COVERAGE

16 displaced villages and the neighbouring villages accommodating these populations

The project benefited populations belonging to ethnic minorities left vulnerable by their forced re-settlement. It aims to meet their basic dietary needs by intensifying livestock production and diversifying crops, by the development of income-generating activities and by supporting the commercialisation of harvests. It aims to improve the health of these populations (infrastructures for drinking water) and sanitary conditions and also to get to grips with recurrent diseases in the region.

# Ethiopia

## Safety net for thousands of rural families

Over and above poor harvests and the limited market availability of foods at certain times, the risks of famine and food insecurity in Ethiopia are also linked above all to household poverty, i.e. the very low purchasing power of families. The local market offers scant openings for revenue-generating activities.



**“ Thanks to the safety net programme I don’t have to sell my goat in order to eat. The Government gives me a helping hand to enable me to have enough to eat. ”**

PSNP beneficiary in the “woreda” at Chiro, Oromia region.

### NAME OF ACTION

Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)

### IMPLEMENTATION

Various Ministerial departments (agriculture, finance) and international institutions (WFP)

### DURATION

2005-2009

### COVERAGE

7.3 million people affected by food insecurity spread over 286 “woredas” (districts) in four national regions

PSNP is a policy initiative backed by the government and other sponsors. Derived from successive humanitarian interventions, this structured system of assistance in kind and in cash provides a scheduled mechanism for providing households with social protection and for creating jobs in communities.

The PSNP system therefore makes it possible to respond to families’ food needs through regular payments of money and food. These transfers are contingent on participation in community work schemes designed to equip the community with social infrastructures and services: schools, medical clinics, irrigation systems, minor infrastructures. This food and cash assistance can be given to the most vulnerable categories of people (the elderly, etc.) without them having to work in return.

PSNP encourages the development of local markets by increasing the purchasing power of families and encouraging them to invest.



# Burkina Faso

## Ensuring self-sufficiency among small producers

The malnutrition rate in Burkina Faso is very high, particularly among children. In some regions confronted by land degradation, agricultural production is failing to meet the population's food needs. In addition, few people have access to drinking water, food availability is sporadic and dependent on the seasons, the poorest are suffering chronic difficulties in terms of access to this food, and these same populations face overexposure to multiple diseases and severe epidemics (malaria, HIV, diarrhoea, etc.).



**“ The enriched porridge made it possible to save my malnourished child. ”**

Woman speaking during a visit to the nutrition training and education centre in the village of Kourpellé in 2007.

### NAME OF ACTION

Food and Nutrition Security – Integrated Programme in the Provinces of Bam and Sanmatenga (PISAN-BAS)

### PARTNERS

‘Zood Nooma’ and ‘Sougri Nooma’ associations

### DURATION

2004-2007

### COVERAGE

direct help for 44,447 members of families belonging to the two associations and living in the 67 villages of the project response zone; indirect help for surrounding villages.

The project has enabled families to better cover their food needs thanks to:

- improved access to seeds and agricultural equipment;
- the development of off-season crops and field work to prevent land erosion. Thus, families have access to food throughout the seasons.

The project has also contributed to an improvement in the nutrition of young children through the following actions:

- training of mothers to prepare enriched porridge for their children, based on local foods;
- increased access to drinking water.





## **European Commission**

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