

“Food and agriculture in times of crisis”

Working better together for long term solutions

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Foreword

Over 100 million people are in food crisis and it will only get worse if current trends are not reversed. Scientific evidence and policy analyses identify three main clusters of drivers of food crises:

- Socio-economic factors: demographic change, urbanization, growing inequality, unequal access to resources, unhealthy eating habits. Poverty.
- Environmental factors: climate change, soil degradation, over-exploitation of natural resources, water scarcity. Reaching the limit.
- Peace and security: armed conflict, good governance, rule of law. Fundamental rights.

The event represents a strategic and unique opportunity to bring together the international community and civil society to thrust into motion a new dynamic for responding collectively to the challenges based on scientific and consensus-based evidence. Solutions exist and new approaches for efficient joint work are possible. There must be no more food crises.

Context

Hunger in all its dimensions is still at unacceptable levels.

Millions of people are increasingly exposed to food crises – *The Global Report on Food Crises 2018* indicated that over 124 million people in 51 countries faced crisis levels of hunger or worse and preliminary data for 2019 indicates comparable figures. Global hunger has increased after a decade of decline – in 2017, the number of chronically undernourished people in the world increased to 821 million, up from 815 million in 2016.

Food crises often occur in the context of complex crises, mostly protracted in nature. They are the extreme manifestation of vulnerability of people, communities and states, caused by many interlinked factors of fragility.

Armed conflict, climate change, over-exploitation of natural resources, social inequality, state fragility and poor governance have brought hunger back into the spotlight, reversing the trend of recent years. Long-term displacement (68 million people in 2017), political instability and conflicts, together with climate-related disasters (especially droughts), are common features both as causes and consequences of all major food crises that tend to become increasingly protracted. Such crises mostly affect rural communities that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

KEY FIGURES GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES 2018

- **124 Million** people acutely food insecure and in need of urgent action in 51 countries, of which:
- **74 Million** people in 18 countries affected by conflicts and insecurity
- **39 Million** people in 23 countries affected by climate-related shocks
- **52 Million** children under 5 acutely malnourished

The last ten years have witnessed a constant growth in humanitarian assistance¹ needs and spending, with an increase of 127 percent in the ten largest crises when compared to 2007 and with approximately 40 percent of humanitarian assistance going to cover food sector needs. These trends cannot be sustained over time, bearing in mind that humanitarian assistance, while critical to save lives and livelihoods and alleviate human suffering, does not address the root causes of food crises. For instance, in 2017 humanitarian assistance played a key role in averting/containing famine in four countries at risk (Yemen, Northeast Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia). Yet, the number of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance had increased from 30 to 35 million by the end of the year.

The cost of inaction

Indeed, despite massive mobilization of resources, funding shortfalls were estimated to be 40 percent in 2017, and humanitarian needs keep growing, making it all the more vital to invest in addressing the causes of food crises across the humanitarian–development nexus. Several initiatives are being implemented at national, regional and global levels to tackle hunger and malnutrition and promote resilience with a longer-term perspective (such as the 3N Initiative in Niger, the Food Crises Prevention Network [RPCA] in West Africa, the Scaling Up Nutrition [SUN] movement and the World Committee on Food Security [CFS] at the global level and, recently, the Famine Early Action Mechanism [FAM] announced by the World Bank as a global mechanism to eradicate famine at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018), in line with SDG2 to fight hunger. These initiatives are the foundation of a renewed commitment to eradicate food crises, hunger and malnutrition. Such initiatives need to be fostered and extended, particularly given that food crises are increasingly shifting from being localized into supranational phenomena, with economic, environmental, social and political spill-over effects in terms of regional instability, security, displacement, poverty and ultimately increasing human suffering and lost development opportunities.

Food crises are not a novelty and have occurred as far back as history goes. What is unprecedented is the regional and global dimension of interlinking causes and consequences and thus the complexity (dealing with geo-political, security, climate change issues) of any coherent strategy to put an end to their re-occurrence.

Complex issues

The agricultural livelihoods of more than 2.5 billion smallholders (including farmers, herders, fishers, forest-dependent communities and people working in the food value chain) and the different agri-food systems are increasingly under pressure and changing dramatically. They are subject to shocks and stresses, either because of complex dynamics such as demographic change, climate change, over-exploitation of natural resources, social and gender discrimination, unequal terms of trade, or because they are deliberately targeted in conflict contexts. They may be over- or under-exploited and deteriorate, thus contributing to a vicious cycle of economic, social and environmental degradation. On the other hand, sound and resilient local agri-food systems together with complementary policies are key to fostering development, generating youth employment, enhancing the role of women, preventing crises, mitigating their impact and sustaining recovery.

An opportunity to address the political and security dimensions of food crises is offered by Resolution 2417 approved the United Nations Security Council in May 2018. Resolution 2417 provides a framework to address conflict-induced hunger by taking a firm stand against the deliberate use of famine by conflicting parties. The recent *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* report on building climate resilience (2018), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees and the Katowice Climate Change Conference (COP24)² held in December 2018 also flagged that our food systems are at risk from a changing climate. Exposure to more complex, frequent and intense climate extremes is threatening to erode and reverse

Policy responses

¹ Humanitarian assistance totalled 27 billion in 2017

² <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/>; (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>), (<https://unfccc.int/katowice>)

progress made in ending hunger and malnutrition.

The international community is therefore called upon to apply a common and integrated approach to deal with food crises, with an emphasis on prevention and preparedness, and on tackling the underlying causes. People have the right to food. Food should be available locally as much as possible. Local and regional agricultural-based livelihoods and related agri-food systems need to be supported to express their full potential to sustain development, prevent food crises and enhance response and recovery when a crisis strikes.

Prevention, preparedness, addressing root causes

Against this background, in May 2016, the European Commissioners for International Cooperation and Development and for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Director of WFP launched the Global Network against Food Crises³ at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). They conceived the Global Network as a consensus-building coordination platform and decision support mechanism to combat food crises from both the humanitarian and development perspectives and tackle the root causes of these crises.

The Global Network acknowledges the centrality of food and agriculture and resilient agri-food systems in preventing food crises, mitigating their impact and boosting recovery and reconstruction. It also acknowledges the need to understand the links and coordinate policies and actions in relation to other complex dynamics and drivers of vulnerability such as conflict and insecurity, climate change, inequality, injustice and demographic change.

The Network engages key organizations committed to combating food crises – governments, resource partners, regional institutions, development and humanitarian agencies, and civil society. At the same time, the Network liaises with established governance mechanisms of global food security and nutrition, and establishes functional linkages with other high-level global initiatives relevant to food crises.

Global Network Goals

- Consensual, harmonized and country-owned food insecurity, resilience and risk analyses of contexts at risk of food crises
- Evidence-based strategic programming at national, regional and global level to prevent and respond to food crises
- Integration of geo-strategic considerations in the prevention and response food crises thus addressing the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, through high-level political uptake and coordination at national, regional, and global level.

Scope of the event

The event will commence with the launch the *Global Report on Food Crises 2019*, which will provide the latest picture of acute food and nutrition insecurity, trends and drivers globally.

Taking stock of the latest information on global hunger and food and nutrition insecurity, the event will promote a **collective reflection** and discussion on the challenges ahead, on the opportunities for effective action and on the political commitments needed to eradicate food crises.

The reflection will elaborate on the centrality of **agricultural livelihoods** and related **agri-food systems** to ensure that food is available and accessible locally as much as possible in crisis contexts, and on their role in fostering development, preventing crises and supporting recovery and reconstruction after crises.

A key feature of the discussion will be the need to understand and address the interrelated links with all the other **drivers of fragility** that contribute to crisis scenarios and ultimately to famine situations. Thus, the need to explore the interactions between agri-food systems and their modifying

³ The Global Network against Food Crises was initially named “Global Network against Food Crises for Food Insecurity, Risk Reduction and Food Crises Response”.

factors including the economic, social, environmental and security dimensions in order to develop solutions for responses that drive prevention and impact mitigation measures, and steer political attention and interest.

Overall, the high-level event will:

- Set the scene of the **current and projected situation** with respect to food crises and related trends and drivers based on solid and consensus-based evidence.
- Highlight current and **future challenges** and **opportunities** to reduce the risks of food crises, focusing on the role of agricultural livelihoods and related agri-food systems in the framework of social, environmental, economic and security dynamics.
- Review policies, initiatives, tools, and coordination mechanisms currently in place to address food crises, exploring whether emerging and recurrent challenges require **changes** and **adaptive strategies**, and defining areas for improvement and **innovative solutions** and **partnerships**.
- Draw political, strategic and operational **conclusions** and define a **roadmap** to address food crises, ensure food security and eradicate hunger by 2030.

The event will highlight the short and long-term risks associated with the increasing occurrence of food crises and will promote a call for action at scale and at all levels.

The event will also provide an opportunity to refine the Global Network priorities and related road map within an SDG perspective, 11 years ahead of 2030 and further consolidate the engagements and commitments of its partners.

Event Format

The event will take place over two days as follows:

DAY 1	MORNING Evidence	Opening ceremony; Launch of the <i>Global Report on Food Crises 2019</i> ; Keynote speakers' presentations.	Exhibit and Share corner
	AFTERNOON Facing challenges and exploiting opportunities	Strategic discussions organized through parallel sessions. In addition, bilateral meetings and exhibits of various information material will be organized to further discuss and elaborate the key themes of the main technical segments.	
DAY 2	MORNING Working better together to prevent food crises	In addition, bilateral meetings and exhibits of various information material will be organized to further discuss and elaborate the key themes of the main technical segments.	
	AFTERNOON Solutions and way forward	Plenary session to reflect on the strategic discussions held and the dynamics set in motion by the Global Network. Drawing of political operational conclusions and defining of a common roadmap.	

An inaugural ceremony will open the event and launch the 2019 Global Report on Food Crises, which will provide the latest picture of acute food and nutrition insecurity, trends and drivers globally. Interventions of keynote speakers will follow and share complementary scientific evidence on key drivers and outcomes of food crises from different entry points.

Evidence and Challenges

Strategic discussions will be organized into two “segments”, namely “Facing challenges and exploiting opportunities” and “Working better together to prevent food crises”. The focus of the two complementary segments will be the role of agricultural livelihoods and related agri-food systems, food security and nutrition in addressing food crises as well as the linkages and interactions with other sectors, dynamics and actors related to food crises.

Thematic sessions

In this framework, a first set of thematic sessions will steer discussions on longstanding and emerging challenges, including opportunities and successful initiatives with potential for scaling up in relation to the three main clusters of drivers of food crises, namely socio-economic issues, environmental issues and climate change, conflict and insecurity.

A second set of thematic sessions will aim to generate political and technical solutions to prevent and respond to food crises from humanitarian and development perspectives and including peace considerations.

All sessions will be organized in collaboration with a “Champion Agency/Organization” identified based on its recognized comparative advantage and relevant technical expertise to convene the specific dialogue of the thematic session. For each panel, a key speaker will be identified to deliver an initial presentation to set the scene and frame the discussion. He/she will be tasked to be a “challenger/provocateur” and ensure that ‘challenging questions’ are asked and addressed.

By bringing together a diversity of technical experts, scientists, academics, practitioners and decision-makers from governmental and non-governmental institutions, implementation agencies, resource partners, private sector and other relevant stakeholders the sessions will maximize the breadth of expertise and diversity of perspectives shared as well as specific entry points (e.g. safety nets and social protection to address socio-economic challenges within food crisis contexts).

Each thematic session will result in an action-oriented note that will feed into the preparation of a final outcome document.

The event will conclude with the presentation of the action oriented notes, a reflection on the dynamics triggered through the strategic discussions and a definition of the way forward, including engagements and commitments by key stakeholders, and eventually help reach consensus on a roadmap and agreed benchmarks towards combating food crises.

The event will benefit from the overall facilitation of an authoritative globally-recognized facilitator, who will take participants from opening to closure, strategically linking the outcomes of sessions and panels.

Facilitation

To supplement the strategic discussions, participants will have the opportunity to walk through an exhibition space hosting documentation, video and photo installations testimony of the joint initiatives, experiences and progresses made so far in addressing food crises at their root causes.

Exhibit and share corner

Participants

Approximately 400 participants from various groups of stakeholders are invited and expected to attend the event. Among these:

1. The members of the Global Network against Food Crises
2. Representatives of national governments, notably from countries at risk of food crises (Head(s) of State, Minister, etc.), cooperation agencies
3. Regional organizations and international organizations not part of the Global Network (peace actors including PBSO)
4. NGOs, farmers’ organizations, foundations, CSOs
5. Research agencies, think tanks, consulting companies
6. Investment banks, private sector
7. EU institutions the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS).