

2021 HLPF Thematic Review

Expert Group Meetings

Virtual, 18-20 May 2021

Meeting Summary for Session on SDG 2

1. Introduction

On 18 May from 8:45-10:15 am EDT, a multi-stakeholder group of about 30 experts from academia, civil society, private sector and UN was convened by FAO, IFAD, and WFP to a breakout session to review SDG-2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture), as part of a wider set Expert Group Meetings (EGMs) organized by UN-DESA to prepare for the 2021 HLPF thematic reviews. Participants assessed progress and challenges to achieving SDG 2 in the context of the broader 2030 Agenda; considered how COVID-19 response and recovery efforts can contribute to achieving these SDGs; identified particular areas of concern and opportunities for transformation; and suggested partnerships and ways forward during the decade of action to mitigate trade-offs, harness synergies and leave no one behind. Moderated by Dr Jo Puri, the Director of the Environment, Climate, Social Inclusion and Nutrition Division at the International Fund for Agriculture, the breakout session included: i) the presentation by FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero of an overview of where we are with SDG2, including challenges and opportunities in the recovery; ii) an approximately 60 minutes interactive segment to hear from experts and, iii) a wrap-up/closing segment where Mr. Bing ZHAO, WFP, Director of Food Systems and Smallholder Farmers Support, summarized the main highlights of the discussions. On May 19, WFP reported back to the EGM plenary on the main findings of the session.

2. Stocktaking and challenges

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the world was already off track to achieve SDG2: hunger was increasing by 10 million people in one year and nearly 60 million in five years, reaching 690 million peoples in 2019. Globally, about 2 billion people are considered moderately or severely food insecure according to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale and more than 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet (SOFI, 2020).¹ It is also worth recalling that acute food insecurity monitored in 55 countries in food crisis is also on the rise, with 155 million peoples affected in 2020, nearly 20 million more than in 2019.²

Looking beyond hunger, the world is not on track to defeat malnutrition. Globally, the burden of malnutrition in all its forms remains a challenge. While we saw some progress in child stunting and breastfeeding in 2019, child overweight was not improving, and adult obesity was on the rise. According to estimates, in 2019, 21.3 percent (144 million) of children under 5 years of age were stunted, 6.9 percent (47 million) wasted and 5.6 percent (38.3 million) overweight.

3. COVID-19 crisis impacts and recovery

COVID-19 exacerbated observed trends, as restrictive policies triggered record levels of global recession unemployment, reduced remittances, disrupted livelihoods, poverty, and food insecurity, particularly in low income countries. The uneven distribution of vaccines will underline uneven progress out of the global recession and the social and economic fallout is expected to take longer to reverse. A preliminary assessment (SOFI 2020) suggests the pandemic may add up to 132 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world in 2020 depending on the economic growth scenario.

While agri-food trade and supply chain disruptions have been less than originally feared, as Governments and partners have protected and supported the functioning of agri-food sectors, food prices have nevertheless increased with the risk of increased use of negative coping strategies by vulnerable households, such as further reducing of nutritious diets and selling of assets, that will have long-term implications. The pandemic has had an increased impact on groups with pre-existing conditions, including indigenous people, smallholder and family farmers, women and youth. Multiple environmental and social injustices converge upon small-scale farmers (up to 2 ha), that represent over 80% of farms worldwide and, despite producing roughly 35% of the world's food on 12% of the agricultural land, are among those

¹ SOFI/State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020.

² (Global Report on Food Crises, 2021)

who suffer worst from hunger and poverty. In many countries they have been unevenly hit by the lack of access to inputs and markets because of restrictions, despite government efforts. The pandemic has fallen unevenly on women in their role as family keepers and small-scale, mostly informal entrepreneurs. The gender gap in food insecurity has grown even larger during the COVID-19 pandemic, with women being about 10% more food insecure than men in 2020. Inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19 compromise sustainable development, exacerbate social segmentation and prevent large parts of the population from rising out of poverty. The ripple effect and implications of COVID-19 are far-ranging and include disruption of humanitarian aid, safety nets and peace operations, postponing to distracting efforts from development. The pandemic has set the ambitious and elusive SDGs even further off track for completion by 2030.

4. Policies and actions to maximize synergies, mitigate trade-offs and drive transformation

Response and recovery efforts are not always green: Efforts towards “Green Development” have been put on hold in many low-income countries in favour of more “traditional” technologies to boost food production. Major challenge will be to strengthen incentives and capacities to re-launch the sustainability agenda. In addition, Re-purposing of development funding to face the emergency will have long-term consequences for growth and poverty reduction if funds are not replenished. There is a need to combine local production with international trade. They are not contradictory and should be sustainable (including recovery from COVID-19, that is one way to build back better). A One Health approach human, plant, animal and environmental health will help promote sustainable production and help mitigate the risk of zoonotic diseases.

5. Means of implementation: Mechanisms and partnerships to accelerate progress

Zero Hunger will not be achieved in a vacuum. We need coherence across SDGs and systemic approaches. A comprehensive and integrated agenda to put agri-food systems on a sustainable path should involve a combination of following solutions adapted to diverse contexts as per SDG 17.

- Financing the recovery, ensuring agri-food systems are at the core of the green recovery plans: this includes public expenditure reviews on the agri-food sector, strengthening rural financial markets, expanding ODA, debt re-structuring and debt relief
- International Cooperation and Solidarity to ensure strengthening health and food systems, vaccine distribution, development assistance across the humanitarian-development nexus, combatting illicit flows to expand the fiscal base
- Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation to make sustainable practices within reach of low-income countries and weaker groups (smallholders, MSMEs, using traditional knowledge)
- Systemic reforms in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, that can strengthen policy, fiscal and judicial space of developing countries for the pursuit of their food system transformation agenda.
- Partnerships: Closer partnership between governments and peoples’ organisations (farmers, especially smallholders and family farmers, consumers, private sector across the food system, indigenous peoples)

Summary of discussions:

Noting a backward trend in progress towards achieving SDG 2, Philip Lumbery from Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) advocated for food systems transformation toward regenerative and agroecological techniques. He stressed that government and civil society can help accelerate actions toward food system transformation. He also highlighted that the current food system produces enough for more than 17 billion people and stressed that a big part of what needs to change is moving away from feeding 4 billion people’s worth of human-edible grain to industrially reared animals, a practice that wastes the majority of the calories and proteins available.

Mr. Rob Vos, Director of Markets, Trade and Institutions Division, IFPRI noted that SDG targets have been pretty optimistic since the beginning and that food systems have proven to be resilient in keeping the food supply fluent but not equal for all. Underscoring that the risk of famine is on the rise, driven mainly by conflict, compounded by COVID-19 and climate change / shocks, he called for more emphasis on humanitarian action, as well as peace building and

development activities that build resilience. He also suggested looking beyond agriculture at the entire supply chain; paying attention to macroeconomic aspects including, currency devaluation, imports in shaping responses and using improved metrics on food crisis to monitor and track progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition (i.e. tracking by population groups in an integrated way).

Mr. Donald Bundy, Professor from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine alerted on future equalities, noting that closure of schools was one of the biggest impacts of the pandemic, as 1.5 billion children lost school and school meals due to the pandemic resulted in the lack of access to school feeding programs, the world's largest safety net. Early age slavery, pregnancy, child marriages etc have started coming up. Many girls won't even go back to schools. As schools are promisingly opening and as part of the effort to recover stronger, he also suggested; i) looking back at 2020 where 90 percent local funding for school feeding programs was achieved and how schools health and nutrition interventions promoted access to school and learning; ii) supporting the School Feeding Coalition that a number of member states have signed up to in the context of the Food Systems Summit and iii) establish a global database to track school feeding programs.

Ms. Carmen Burbano, Director of WFP's school feeding unit echoed concerns over rising hunger. She added that only by strengthening food, health and social protection systems can we address immediate and underline causes of malnutrition and bring back lost human capital. Stressing the need to develop opportunities where multiple SDGs are tackled together, she noted that school feeding programs are fundamental platforms to link the production and demand sides of food systems through local procurement of food. She agreed with Mr. Donald Bundy on the importance of the School Feeding Coalition, highlighting the importance of the Food System Summit in keeping the conversation ongoing.

Mr. Dan Smith from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) highlighted that armed conflicts and climate change, are background causes for hunger, noting that the past 7 years were the hottest ever and the next 8 out of 10 years should be among the hottest ever recorded. He called to action to address the problem, noting that leaving out peace and security is leaving out a big part of the problem and the solution and that food is foundation for peace and peace is foundation for food security.

Noting that COVID-19 has increased the need for resources and at the same time resource mobilization has become more difficult, Mr. Vikas Rawal, Professor and co-director of Society for Economic and Social Research in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, suggested identifying priorities, estimating resource gaps and mobilizing resources to drive actions. He stressed that smallholder food producers have proven to be resilient and that their position in agri-food systems needs to be strengthened. She also suggested improving data, monitoring system and indicators. He also recommended that the 2021 HLPF strongly reaffirm and express the political commitment to end hunger and food security by 2030, and chart a new course for reaching the Goal.

Ms. Marlene Ramirez, from the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, suggested that farmers rather than private businesses should gain major power in global markets and called for accountable and responsible agri-food system investments, leveraging intelligent partnerships. She added that strong partnership between the people and governments based on mutual trust, solidarity and recognition of each other's contributions was a far more strategic and bottom-up approach to investment and financing.

Ms. Robynne Anderson, representing the Business & Industry Major Group, called for the following actions to address multidimensional poverty: i) investing in rural infrastructure and inclusive value chains that allow value added production in agri-food systems; ii) innovation and data driven solutions in rural areas; iii) addressing rural lands issues and encouraging integrating more ecologically sound local production in the global trade of food.

Mr. Rabi H. Mohtar, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut, outlined how the food system is connected to other enabling and interacting systems that needs to be quantified and actions must be taken in context of this bigger system, in particular: water, energy, land. This nexus of interactions must be considered as actions related to any of these related systems will impact the food goal. He also stressed that there will be tradeoffs to any actions within the above-mentioned system of systems. These tradeoffs must be based on metrics and criteria that are clearly defined and communicated for the benefit of society. Finally, he suggested that the business model for food production and management needs to evolve to address nutritional security (not only

biomass production), values of input use (water, energy, land) and implications to the production (air, soil, water pollution, human and ecosystem health).

Ms. Grace Githiri from UN Habitat called for an improved territorial food system's governance; supporting localization of national planning; reinforcing urban-rural linkages and integrated territorial development in National Urban Policies; and, promoting networks and associations of planners in different jurisdictions.

Noting that farmers have silently done their job and that agriculture sector has kept its promise during the pandemic, Ms. Luisa Volpe, representing the Farmers Major Group, called for a more enabling and inclusive systems, cross sectoral policies to build resilience of farmers, and for increased spaces for participation of farmers in policy making processes .

Ms. Andrea Carmen: Executive Director, International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) emphasised the marginalization of indigenous people and the erosion of traditional food systems. She called upon States and the UN systems to include indigenous people as full participants in decision making and reporting on SDG and to take their time-tested knowledge into account.

Ms. Jennifer Clapp, member of the Steering Committee of CFS High-Level Panel of Experts, and Professor, University of Waterloo, Canada, highlighted the issues of: i) growing concentration of power and rising inequality in food systems and ii) ecologically and socially unsustainable nature of food system. She suggested rethinking food systems and adding to the definition of food security the dimensions of agency (the capacity of individual and groups to make their own decisions about how they relate to food systems); and sustainability(the long-term ability of food systems to provide food security and nutrition in ways that do not undermine the economic, social and environmental bases that generate food security for future generations).

Ms. Magdalena Ackermann, Policy and Advocacy Officer, Food Systems and Agroecology, Society for international Development (SID), highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on farmers, especially women smallholders, and stressed the need to reassert the public dimension of food systems. She also underscored the importance of local food systems and agroecological transformative pathways to achieve sustainable and resilient food systems and the governance of food systems, anchored in human the rights framework.

Ms. Tania Eulalia Martinez-Cruz, member of the Global Hub on Indigenous Peoples Food Systems, Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich, stressed the importance of agency and suggested embracing local solutions and interculturality by including voices of Indigenous people to raise their concerns and needs into the dialogue.

Noting that young peoples have been unevenly affected by COVID-19, Ms. Pramisha Thapaliya, representative of the Major Group of Children and Youth, stressed the need for an intergenerational approach, linked with social protection. She informed that in a survey prior to the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2021, , most youth reported that their access to food had been impacted by COVID-19, and identified economic fallout, lack of access to social protection as well as increase in food related costs as reasons for this.

Ms. Elenita Neth Dano, co-director ETC Group, suggested considering both long and short supply chains and institutionalizing models of short supply chains. She also advocated for consolidating urban agri-food systems / urban farming and for a model of solidarity economy that builds on digital platforms and leverages social deliberations (interactions between producers and consumers) to unlock opportunities and tap innovation.

Ms. Estrella Esther Penunia, from the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Development (AFA), called for i) coherent policy and programs that focuses on strengthening small scale family farmers and farmers' cooperatives ;ii) governments to facilitate the design and implementation of national and regional action plans for the UN Decade of Family Farming; iii) to support the Agency of family farmers by providing longer term, direct financing to family farming organizations so that we can engage effectively in policy work and strengthen initiatives and partnerships with other stakeholders.

Tabi Joda, from GreenAid stressed that Now is the time to focus on "How" to apply above suggestions and "by Whom?". He called for new solutions, ensuring that we reach the last mile, considering cultural and local specificities, and noted that science, technology, and innovation was not accessible by all.

Reacting to comments made, Mr. Maximo Torero, FAO Chief Economist noted that any policy and action will have tradeoffs. He emphasized that it was important is to identify the tradeoffs and to establish policies to minimize them. He added that reducing inequalities and conflicts was key to end hunger need to start thinking more seriously about reducing inequalities.

In his wrap up and closing remarks, Bing Zhao, Director Food Systems and smallholder farmers support, WFP, underlined the need for a two-pronged approach – to address the critical short-term damage done by COVID-19 and to simultaneously target the long-term drivers of food security and malnutrition, noting that the pandemic is a challenge, but it also offers us an opportunity to recover stronger. This require a shift in mindset, including to see food as a critical right for all people, he said. Noting that countries need food system that are designed to deliver healthy economies, healthier people and a healthier planet, he stressed that we need to pursue greater multi-sector and multi-institutional approaches to influencing systems – especially related to health, social protection and food. The agriculture-nutrition community has led the way by demonstrating the impact of creating healthy linkages between supply and demand throughout the value chain, leveraging local procurement, he indicated, noting that School feeding plays a critical role, in this regard. He called on all stakeholders (including private sector) to partner in achieving SDG 2, leveraging the key summits and meetings ahead this year, including the HLPF, the G20, the Nutrition for growth summit and the Food Systems Summit, to create a momentum and crystalize energy and focus to the purpose.

2021 HLPF Thematic Review Expert Group Meetings

In-focus session on SDG2

Invited experts (12 May)

1. Ms. Magdalena Ackermann: Policy & Advocacy Officer, Food Systems and Agroecology, SID
2. Ms. Robynne Anderson: Business & Industry Major Group
3. Mr. Donald Bundy: The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
4. Ms. Carmen Burbano: Director of WFP's school feeding unit
5. Ms. Andrea Carmen: Executive Director, International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)
6. Ms. Jennifer Clapp: member of the Steering Committee of CFS High-Level Panel of Experts, University of Waterloo, Canada
7. Ms. Elenita Neth Dano: co-director ETC Group
8. Ms. Kimberley Flowers: The Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs at Colby College
9. Mr. Thomas Forster: UN Habitat
10. Ms. Grace Githiri: Associate Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat
11. Ms. Lorena Guillen Gaibor: Local Authorities Major Group (tbc) (NOT PRESENT)
12. Mr. Tabi Joda: Green Aid
13. Ms. Esaya Jokonya, Sendai Stakeholder Mechanism
14. Ms. Tania Eulalia Martinez-Cruz: member of the Global Hub on Indigenous Peoples Food Systems, Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich
15. Nadira Masiumova: LGBTI
16. Mr. Rabi H. Mohtar: Professor and Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, American University of Beirut
17. Mr. Daniel Mwendah M'Mailu: Farmers Major Group
18. Ms. Estrella Esther Penunia: Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Development (AFA)
19. Ms. Jyotsna Puri: IFAD Director, Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division
20. Ms. Marlene Ramirez: Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism
21. Ms. Vikas Rawal: Jawaharlal Nehru University, co-director of Society for Economic and Social Research in Delhi
22. Mr. Dan Smith: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
23. Ms. Pramisha Thapaliya: Major Group of Children and Youth
24. Mr. Maximo Torero: FAO Chief Economist
25. Mr. Joachin Von Braun: The Center for Development Research (ZEF), Chair of the Scientific Group of the Food Systems Summit 2021
26. Mr. Rob Vos: IFPRI, Director of Markets, Trade and Institutions Division
27. Mr. Bing ZHAO: WFP, Director of Food Systems and Smallholder Farmers Support