

## **Ending hunger and achieving food security for all** **Inputs to the Guiding Questions for the Background Paper**

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1. **Which areas and socio-economic groups** are especially vulnerable to poor nutrition and food insecurity and what are ways to ensure that food systems transformations leave no one behind?

It is a sad irony that the most vulnerable to poor nutrition and food insecurity are smallholder farmers, fisherfolks and indigenous communities that produce food for the rest of the population globally. ETC Group estimates that about 70% of the world's population depend on production by smallholder farmers and producers for most or all of their food. This includes almost all of the 3.5 billion rural people globally, about 1 billion urban food producers, most of the 800 million people who depend on small-scale fisheries for their food and livelihood, and hundreds of millions who regularly turn to smallholder-produced food and survival crops in times of scarcity<sup>1</sup>. Studies show that extreme poverty is overwhelmingly prevalent in rural areas, with an estimated 79% of people experiencing poverty globally living in rural areas<sup>2</sup>. FAO data showed that rural children in developing countries are twice more likely to be underweight than those in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> The 2019 Global Food Policy Report estimates that 80% of the extreme poor and 75% of the relatively poor globally live in rural areas and most work in agriculture.<sup>4</sup>

Hunger and malnutrition in all its forms have gender and age dimensions. Globally, 60% of the chronically hungry are women and girls, even higher in regions like Asia and the Pacific. In many areas, girls and women living in poverty and food-insecure households only eat after male family members and eat less nutritious food. Studies in Asia and Africa revealed the extent to which many adolescent girls are underweight and the links between malnutrition and iron deficiency when girls begin menstruating.

A key underlying reason behind the tragedy of poor and undernourished food producers is the fractured and unsustainable global food system. The dominant agricultural system involves adverse environmental impacts, huge greenhouse gas emissions, high economic costs and susceptibility to price spikes and artificial shortages. Industrial agriculture uses more than 75% of the world's agricultural land, destroys 75 billion tons of topsoil annually and closely associated with cutting down 7.5 million hectares of forest.<sup>5</sup> It accounts for at least 90% of agriculture's fossil fuel use and ghg emissions and at least 80% of freshwater use. It is also extremely unhealthy as evidenced by persistent malnutrition and based on very narrow regard of food system that does not take into consideration the well-being of smallholders and landless farmers and food producers.

2. **What fundamental changes are needed** to make our food systems an engine for inclusive growth and contribute to accelerating progress towards ending hunger and achieving food security for all in the Decade of Action?

One of the major issues that needs to be addressed by urgent action and transformative pathways is the broken food and agriculture system which has been captured by big business and corporate interests at the expense of natural resources, biodiversity, livelihoods, health and local food security. Policies, incentives and support should move away from industrial agricultural models towards regenerative agriculture that is humane and sustainable. Export models should be replaced by local production and consumption systems, including community supported agriculture and school vegetable gardens. Diets need to move towards healthier and more productive and environmentally-friendly predominantly plant-based foods, away from industrial food systems' focus on meat that that needs five times more water than calories from vegetables. The globalization of food systems means that the food we eat uses water from someone else's country.

Food wastes at consumption end, which is worth US\$8.3 billion annually equivalent to 40% of the total value of annual production in the world, need to be addressed urgently by governments. Of the 4 billion tons of food produced in industrial food system annual, 33–50% is wasted, costing consumers US\$2.49 trillion per year.<sup>6</sup> Food losses in the production, postharvest and processing stages in food system is also significant. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the world's most impoverished regions, about 6–11 kg of food per person annually is wasted at the household level due to scarce investment in improved storage and transport. A sustainable food system that is based on small-scale, decentralized and diverse food producers and providers must replace the current one in order to achieve the SDG on food security and addressing hunger and ensure that no one is left behind.

**a) How could they be designed and implemented to generate synergies and strengthen existing ones with other Goals and Targets?**

The regional survey of the GSDR 2019 show that financialization of food systems, unjust trade policies and agreements, increasing corporate control on the entire food chain including over land, seeds and other natural resources; dispossession and lack of secure land tenure especially for women farmers; rising input costs and indebtedness; the increasing adverse tradeoff between food and energy and meat industry, and the siloed approach to food and agriculture on one hand, and health and nutrition on other, threaten food and nutrition systems and put agriculture and farmers in precarious conditions.<sup>7</sup> Food, nutrition and agriculture clearly intersects with many other goals in the SDG framework namely poverty eradication, health, education, women empowerment, water and sanitation, decent work, inequality, sustainable consumption and production, climate change, and life on land. Without commensurate progress in each of these goals, it is extremely unlikely to achieve significant advance in sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns.

**b) What are some of the possible trade-offs from these changes and how can they be mitigated?**

3. **How might COVID-19 facilitate or complicate** the implementation of needed food systems changes?

a) **Will it aggravate and/or reduce vulnerabilities?**

Among those who suffer most during the COVID-19 global pandemic are the small, marginalized and landless farmers including women, majority of whom work as daily wagers both in rural and urban areas. They bear the brunt of this raging public health crisis and doubly burdened by policy responses and measures adopted by governments which are often militarist and disproportionately repressive against farmers and the urban poor. Without social protection in place, the vulnerabilities of marginalized peoples are magnified and their burden aggravated. The current Covid-19 crisis has major effects on food security, with supply chains disrupted and agricultural labor forces at high risks. These factors that reduce the availability of food are coupled with economic factors that limit purchasing power, creating a major threat to food security. According to the World Food Programme, Covid-19 could nearly double the number of people suffering from acute hunger globally.

As the pandemic aggravated the vulnerabilities of smallholder farmers and small-scale food producers, it also exposed the fragilities of the global food systems. Industrial farming based on monoculture, genetic uniformity and destructive dependence on chemical inputs are at the core of the problems in food, agriculture and nutrition that the world is facing. Heavy use of antibiotics in industrial poultry and livestock farming has produced devastating zoonotic diseases such as avian flu, SARS, MERS and now Covid-19 over the past 25 years. Industrial-scale breeding and raising of animals in confinement is essentially a factory of animal and human epidemics. Large concentration of genetically uniform and overcrowded animals with weakened immune systems to which antibiotics are continuously administered, are the leading causes of global antibiotic resistance according to the WHO. Industrial livestock, piggery and poultry are perfect breeding ground for more lethal virus mutations and multi-resistant bacteria to antibiotics which are widely distributed globally under free trade agreements. Biologist Rob Wallace, author of the book *Big Farms Make Big Flu* has documented this process by analyzing outbreaks of new animal viruses, avian and swine flu, Ebola, Zika, HIV and others. Much of these zoonoses originated in hatcheries, others were transmitted from wild animals onto intermediaries which are often animals that are eaten by humans.

The concomitant causes of epidemic/pandemic include the massive raising of animals that go hand-in-hand with the destruction of natural habitats and biodiversity which would have functioned as containment barriers to the spread of viruses in wild animal populations. The main culprit for this destruction of ecosystems are agribusiness food system as a whole, uncontrolled urban expansion and the advancement of megaprojects to support urban growth such as mining, roads and industrial corridors. The agro-industrial food system plays a key role in this destruction, with expansion of industrial agricultural frontier as the main cause of deforestation worldwide according to the FAO. 78% of the planet's agricultural land is used for large-scale livestock as pasture or for forage cultivation while more than 60% cereals planted globally are for feeding animals in confinement.<sup>8</sup>

The role of competing claims on natural resources, land degradation and deforestation and the consequent displacement of poor farmers and indigenous peoples as underlying causes of Covid-19 and other zoonotic diseases cannot be overemphasized. Resource-poor farmers who are driven into wildlife habitats and into eking a living from illegal trade of wildlife have been unfairly blamed for the spread of zoonotic diseases while private interests and corporations that profit from wide-scale destruction of forests and wildlife habitats for expansion of industrial plantations and agribusiness even receive government subsidies.

**b) What are the changes in design and implementation of policies affecting food systems which are necessary to prevent and better deal with food security and nutrition impacts of infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics in the future?**

Corporate concentration and power is a major source of fragility of the global food system that seriously threatens vulnerable sectors, even democratic institutions. In each step of the agro-industrial food chain, only 4-5 large transnationals dominate more than 50% of the global market.<sup>9</sup> Only 3 companies control all sales of poultry genetics worldwide, while another 3 dominate half of the global market of all pig genetics and a few more in bovine genetics. This has resulted to enormous genetic uniformity in hatcheries which facilitates the transmission and mutation of viruses. Despite disasters from a string of zoonotic diseases earlier all the way to the Covid-19 pandemic, these companies continue their activities, brewing the next pandemic which could even occur while the current one is still active. Big food and agrochemical corporations including those involved in large-scale, export-oriented agribusiness and other extractive activities that wantonly to plunder our agricultural and natural resources for massive profits, should be made accountable for the long-term and far-reaching devastation caused by their business activities.

Investments in agriculture, including in research and development, should be shifted away from the industrial model of farming to diverse, local, ecologically-friendly and smallholder-led models that include agroecological farming. With the right policies, land and rights, peasant-led agroecological strategies could double or even triple rural employment, substantially reduce the pressure for urban migration, significantly improve nutritional quality and availability, and eliminate hunger while slashing agriculture's GHG emissions by more than 90%.

**c) What of the current immediate actions we are seeing will contribute to the long-term resilience of food systems?**

One of the few silver linings in the gloom of the pandemic is the resurgence of local food supply systems particularly in rural and peri-urban areas across the region. The closure of borders between and within countries that cut off or severely reduced transportation have opened up opportunities for small-scale food producers and artisans to establish direct connections to consumers and local communities. Barter systems among households and communities have even emerged in many areas, and solidarity economies have sprouted to support those that have no or limited resources to buy food during lockdowns. Such efforts to activate local markets, promote community-supported agriculture and strengthen the local food web must be sustained and encouraged as part of the new normal that humanity needs to put in place in the aftermath of the pandemic. Governments need to adopt

agricultural value chain development guidelines that promote transformational partnership with small scale producers founded on food security/sovereignty, resilience, sustainability and women's economic empowerment.

Any post-Covid recovery plan involving food, biodiversity, land and other productive resources needs to have strong safeguards to protect rights including migrant workers' rights, farmer and peasant rights, rights of nature), strong mechanisms of participation, free and prior informed consent (FPIC) and governance led by marginalized peoples, farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolks and rural women.

4. **What knowledge and data gaps need to be filled** for better analyzing current successes and failures in food systems and the trade-offs and synergies, across SDGs, in implementing food systems changes to fix these failures?

In order to better analyze the reality of the food systems and associated trade-offs and synergies across SDGs, knowledge and data need to capture and recognize the actual contribution of smallholder farmers, small-scale producers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, urban food producers and rural women in ensuring food security and community resilience. Metrics and framework need to be adapted to the realities and capacities of marginalized groups and smallscale producers that have largely been made invisible in official statistics and data that only capture production at commercial scale. Only by adopting the lens of those who are left behind can data and knowledge be relevant and useful for them.

5. **What partnerships and initiatives are needed** to harness synergies and/or reduce trade-offs in food systems?

- a) **What are the most critical interventions and partnerships needed over next 2 years, 5 years, 10 years?**

Ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition; and promoting sustainable agriculture cannot be done without farmers, rural women and girls, and indigenous peoples. For smallholders, small-scale food producers, fisherfolks and pastoralists to continue feeding themselves and others, policies are needed that would: <sup>10</sup>

1. Ensure agrarian reform including the right to territories (land, water, forests, fishing, foraging, hunting);
2. Restore the right to freely save, plant, exchange, sell and breed seeds and livestock;
3. Remove regulations blocking local markets and diversity;
4. Reorient public R&D to respond to priorities and directions set by smallholders and small-scale producers;
5. Institute fair trade, determined by peasant-led policies; and
6. Establish fair wages and working conditions for food and agricultural workers.

On governance, security of land tenure, genuine agrarian reforms, check on diversion of land for non-agricultural purposes, promotion of agroecological approaches with emphasis on prevention of genetic engineering and banned hazardous pesticides, and protection of farmers and their products from predatory trade practices, etc. are some of the governance measures urgently required. The right to food and nutrition are basic human rights.

Corporate capture of the food system and global trade agreements undermine these human rights and food sovereignty. Corporate and feudal control over land and consolidation in the food, agriculture and nutrition sectors must be curbed and regulated. People's control over land, seeds, and water, are threatened, even as women and girls do not have a right to own or control these resources in many contexts.

Women hold disproportionately less land rights than men compared to the amount of land on which they labor. Women's equal access to agricultural resources could decrease the percentage of undernourished people by 12 to 17 percent. Moreover, women's land rights are associated with better nutritional and health outcomes. Though some gains have been made to formalize women's land rights, enforcement is still lacking. Women must have access to affordable legal services, fair and honest land administration, and gender neutral enforcement and judicial systems to uphold their land rights. Lacking these rights often excludes women from active participation in planning and decision-making because they lack legitimacy. There is lack of price standardization as small farmers most of whom are women cannot access markets, their produce is sold below the market price. There is a need to standardize prices for all farm produce. There is also a need to put in place national policies and guidelines to regulate sustainable consumption and production, including of governments and the private sector, through appropriate incentives and sanctions.

On individual and collective actions: Recognize the role of smallholder farmers and food producers in producing 80% of the world's food, and their innovations in producing many stellar examples in food production, mixed farming, non-pesticidal management, adopting technology and strengthening local food systems and ecological conservation. These need to be supported by measures in financing which include increasing public investments in infrastructure, education, research and development in agriculture, and curb reliance on private funding which is often skewed in favor of profit than social and ecological sustainability.

#### **b) Can these be scaled up or adjusted to fit other contexts?**

To scale up the recommendations presented above, Governments must:

1. Make the necessary measures to realize and institutionalize the full and effective participation of small-scale farmers and food producers and indigenous peoples in the decision making processes that may affect them and, in the design, implementation, and, monitoring of public programs on land and agriculture;
2. Take the necessary measures to ensure the availability of data disaggregation beyond gender and age to meet the needs of indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers and food producers and to make them visible in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
3. Ensure transparent, participatory and democratic negotiations of trade agreements that do not harm the rights of smallholder farmers, family farmers and indigenous peoples and recognize and respect Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of communities;
4. Respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate, culturally appropriate and safe food and nutrition for all, including addressing the specific needs of women, youth and children;
5. Provide nutrition education at all levels, and promote nutritionally balanced and diverse diets, particularly utilising traditional and local knowledge, practices and food, along with appropriate supplementation, especially for girls, pregnant and breastfeeding women.

6. Prioritise the transformation of food and agriculture systems by moving political support and all subsidies and incentives away from industrial agriculture models and monoculture production which degrade the environment and destroy local livelihoods and food security, towards regenerative systems of local production/consumption;
7. Raise awareness on and establish mechanism for participatory and transparent evaluation of the potential impacts of new and unproven technologies in food and agriculture;
8. Provide secure, safe, regular and cost effective transportation for women agro-businesses and improve urban and rural linkages for farm to market delivery;
9. Ensure regulation, accountability, and justice in cases of violations of the right to land, including state and corporate land and other resource grabbing, and establish grievance mechanisms for small scale farmers, indigenous communities, and other marginalised groups whose rights to land have been violated; and
10. Establish and support gender-, culture-, and age-responsive policies for agroecology, as well as fishery in the coastal regions, including ensuring biodiversity of seeds and plants, and control and ownership of land, water, and other resources.

**c) How can the private sector support investments for sustainable agriculture production and supply reduce food insecurity?**

Community-supported agriculture, solidarity economy models and initiatives in direct consumer-producer linkages must be supported, actively promoted and enabled by providing access to financing, capacity development and markets. Cooperatives and social enterprises engaged in sustainable local economic development initiatives that enable the poor and marginalized to advance food security and have access to basic social services need to be recognized and supported by governments.

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<sup>1</sup> ETC Group, 2017. Who Will Feed Us? Accessed 9 May 2020, see: (Who Will Feed Us, The Peasant Food Web vs. the Industrial Food Chain. Accessed on 8 May 2020, see:

<https://www.etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/files/etc-whoillfeedus-english-webshare.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Suttie, David, 2018. "Overview: Rural Poverty in Developing Countries: Issues, Policies and Challenges", IFAD. Accessed on 9 May 2020, see: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Rural-poverty-EGM\\_IFAD-overview.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/Rural-poverty-EGM_IFAD-overview.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> FAO, n.d., Accessed on 10 May 2020, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/i2490e/i2490e02b.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> IFPRI, 2019. "Global Food Policy Report", Accessed on 9 May 2020, see:

<http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/133129/filename/133348.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> ETC Group, 2017. Who Will Feed Us? Accessed 9 May 2020, see: (Who Will Feed Us, The Peasant Food Web vs. the Industrial Food Chain

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Global Sustainable Development Report 2019. "The Future is Now; Science for Achieving Sustainable Development". Accessed on 8 May 2020, available in:

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> ETC Group, 2017. Who Will Feed Us? Accessed 9 May 2020, see: (Who Will Feed Us, The Peasant Food Web vs. the Industrial Food Chain

<sup>9</sup> ETC Group, 2020. "Plate Tech-tonics, Mapping Corporate Power in Big Food". Accessed on 8 May 2020, available in:

[https://etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/files/etc\\_platetechtonics\\_a4\\_nov2019\\_web.pdf](https://etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/files/etc_platetechtonics_a4_nov2019_web.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> ETC Group, 2017. Who Will Feed Us? Accessed 9 May 2020, see: (Who Will Feed Us, The Peasant Food Web vs. the Industrial Food Chain