

HLPF 2020 thematic session on ending hunger and achieving food security

Answers to Guiding questions - UNDRR

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?

Increasing exposure to systemic disaster risk, exacerbated by climate change, can trap those dependent on agriculture as a livelihood in cycles of food insecurity and poverty. Access to nutritious food that is priced within reach is a critical component of reducing underlying vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk.

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?

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

Disaster risk reduction must be integrated into food systems, guided by national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, in line with the Sendai Framework's target (e)¹ developed by 2020 and complemented by sufficient financing.

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

Managing the risk involved in trade-off decisions is critical, using the Sendai Framework as a guide and taking a systemic view of risks across the 2030 Agenda. For example, when the implementation of SDG 2 influences the implementation of SDG 6, one possible outcome is heightened levels of disaster risk, including from competition over water resources, groundwater depletion, decreased soil health, and the pollution of water systems due to fertilizer and other forms of runoff. Competition over water resources, versus other needs such as drinking water and proper sanitation, can in turn affect the implementation of other goals such as SDGs 3 and 16. Unmitigated risk generated by a lack of consideration for the trade-offs in the implementation of SDG 2 and 6 can also have implications for SDGs 1 and 8, as unsustainable agricultural practices can increase the exposure of farmers and pastoralists to shocks and stressors when soil is degenerated, soil water retention is low, and the potential for drought is increased. To mitigate these risks, it is critical to promote and continue to research sustainable agricultural technologies that support land and soil quality improvement, the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, and resilient crops such as drought tolerant crops.

¹ Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

Where the implementation of SDG 2 influences SDG 15, it is critical that agricultural production does not contribute to deforestation and land degradation, which exacerbates the vulnerability of farmers to shocks and stressors as well as the capacity of nature itself to mitigate exposure. Prioritizing short-term high yield unsustainable agricultural practices and systems also influences the implementation of SDG 13, due to the high carbon storage and sequestration potential of healthy soil, contributing to the increased frequency and intensity of natural hazards.

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

a) Will it aggravate and/or reduce vulnerabilities?

It remains to be seen how the cascading impacts of COVID-19 will affect global food systems. Lessons should be drawn from past events including the 2007-2008 food price crisis, which demonstrated how energy shocks, increased energy demand, exchange rate fluctuations, and fiscal and monetary expansions amplified the impact of reduced production resulting from severe drought and heat-wave conditions, and other examples of how the impacts of shocks and stressors can cascade across sectors and siloes, impacting global food systems.

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?

It is critical that at the design phase and throughout implementation policies affecting food systems are informed by national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans. The aforementioned strategies and plans must be multi-hazard and inclusive, considering all potential economic, social and environmental shocks and stressors.

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

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?

Applying a risk-lens to trade-offs and synergies across the SDGs is imperative to better understand how food systems intersect and are influenced by other systems, towards a more sustainable whole-of-system.

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?

Disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation should be mainstreamed into agricultural sector planning and investments, informed by national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans. It is critical that risks stemming from farming activities including higher carbon emissions, the effects of fertilizers, and threats to water resources must be managed. Strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale and family farmers, whose productivity is

systematically lower than all other food producers, is essential to better prevent and deal with food security issues moving forward. Sustainable and productive agricultural systems, including farm technologies, and practices such as crop diversification to adjust to new temperature and precipitation patterns, changing livestock breeding practices and shifting grazing patterns, developing and managing climate resilient food production systems, developing and using drought and flood-tolerant crop varieties and adopting water and soil moisture conservation measures are just a few examples that could help prevent, mitigate and reduce disaster risk.

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

The interventions outlined above can and should be scaled up, contextualized, and adjusted where appropriate.

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

For private sector investments to reduce food insecurity, they must be risk-informed, and address the needs of the most vulnerable and exposed.