

FOOD SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD – GOING ON PARALLEL TRACKS OR CONVERGING?

Dear Forum Members,

My name is Dubravka Bojić Bultrini and I work as a legal consultant in the FAO Right to Food Unit. I'm very happy to launch a discussion on food security and the human right to adequate food. The Right to Food Unit was established in 2006 to follow-up on the Right to Food Guidelines (adopted by the FAO Council in 2004). In the last three years, the Unit has supported several countries in right to food legislation, monitoring, assessment and policies, as well as capacity strengthening. We have prepared new methodologies, undertaken research and issued training and advocacy material.

Applying human rights based approach to food security means a change in perspective. In a rights-based perspective taking steps to achieve food security is not a matter of policy discretion of governments; it is their legal obligation. The right to food does not dictate the design of food security policies or strategies but provides a yardstick for assessing government performance, and establishes the right of persons to challenge and hold government to account for what has been done or not done. The right to food also reinforces **the concept of food security with human rights principles**. This means that **decision-making processes** - formulation, implementation and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes - **must be participatory, transparent and non-discriminatory**. They must be taken in **full respect of human dignity of people and be based on the rule of law**. Through this process, people are empowered to take control of their own lives and hold their government to account.

Many of those principles are already seen as good development practice. Human rights law provides framework that can strengthen and improve such good practices. If all those who are involved in food security work draw systematically on human rights principles and standards, both the process and the outcomes are likely to be more objective and transparent, and enjoy greater legitimacy in addition to legal authority.

In recent years the concepts of food security and the human right to food started to converge, but there are still important challenges involved in bringing them together at both analytical and operational levels. The dramatic rise in food prices has put hunger and food security to the top of the international agenda, including of international human rights agencies (such as Human Rights Council). This provides renewed urgency to the search for sustainable food security solutions. We believe the right to food can and should be a major part of that search.

To inform these discussions and form the basis for further action, I look forward to hearing your experiences and insights as to the following:

- Experiences in the **practical application of human rights based approach to food security at national & local levels**;
- Practical experiences on **human rights based food security policies, projects, programmes or plans**;
- Documents and other relevant information about **right to food field-level activities**;

- Practical ways to promote the **convergence between the right to food, food security and development.**

Thank you all in advance for the time and effort you will invest in this debate, which will - I hope - stimulate further discussions in FAO and other members of the UN Food Security Task Force, as well as within countries.

Best regards,
Dubravka Bojic Bultrini

PS. FAO is hosting a **Right to Food Forum from 1 to 3 October this year**. The Forum will bring together practitioners and stakeholders from many countries, from fields of agriculture, education, social development, nutrition and human rights to draw lessons learned so far in implementation of the right to food around the world. The Right to Food Forum and the FNS email discussion will be mutually reinforcing. See http://www.fao.org/righttofood/rtf_forum/index_en.html

For further information about the right to food, see:

What is the right to food?

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?no_cache=1&r=542&nocache=1

Questions and answers

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?no_cache=1&r=543&nocache=1

Right to Food Guidelines

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?no_cache=1&r=544&nocache=1