

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 46  
**FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS**  
FROM 21 OCTOBER TO 30 NOVEMBER 2009

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## **I. ISSUES RAISED**

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The topic raisers invited FSN Forum members to discuss on the role governance plays in food security and on how new governance models with the involvement of a wider range of actors could improve the actual situation. The debate touched different models of food production in the context of climate change, views on the role of markets, access and use of natural resources as well as specific examples of governance flaws in the food sector.

## **II. THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM AND FOOD SECURITY**

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In general the issue of food security and fighting hunger is not only about production failure but also about a lack of open and transparent governance in distribution and utilization of produced food and related goods (F. Bushira).

Therefore question is not simply of agricultural governance, but of food system governance in its entirety and how it integrates with the Earth's system as a whole (K. Agyemang, L. Pereira).

*Global governance* is understood as a minimum framework of rules necessary to tackle global problems, guaranteed by a set of institutions, formal and informal, international and local, and representing the interests of as many stakeholders as possible (M. V. Whittingham Munevar).

In the food system global governance at many levels is both fragmented and neglected, specifically:

- Cultivation in most of the major food grain producers of the world has become a battle between traditional knowledge (which is in general not winning) and corporate plus government methods that have little to do with community needs (R. Goswami).
- The export oriented model industrial agriculture model is far from providing enough food to mankind (World Rural Forum).
- The divide between excess food fed and once a day fed is increasing despite the evidence that this world has enough food to feed its inhabitants (K V Peter).
- Many programs and campaigns at national level tend to cut out farming household, the agricultural community and local markets (R. Goswami).

## **III. WHAT KIND OF FOOD PRODUCTION MODELS SHOULD BE PROMOTED?**

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Participants proposed various models of agricultural production that can help in reducing people's food insecurity and vulnerability to climate change, moving away from fossil fuel based food production:

- Natural and organic food production: increasing the organic content of farming soil from the current average of 1% to about 5% would sequester approximately 150 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> – about 5 times the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (M. Lakhani).

- Agroforestry or tree based integrated farming system involving a combination of compatible tree species and agricultural crops with or without livestock components: this production model is the most appropriate for deriving both productive and protective benefits; when promoted at the national level it augments the availability of nutritious foods at the local level, improves the quality of the local environment and reduces people's vulnerability to climatic variations (P.K.Thampan).

Agroforestry and organic food production both involve closer interaction between farmers and their crops promoting knowledge about plants as opposed to the industrial model where a so-called farmer is just driving an enormous machine which does all the work (M. van Hemstra).

- Localised and integrated approaches to food: will encourage development spending in rural areas, encourage employment (think 'green jobs' too) and shrink income disparities, the opposite of which is taking place under the market-industry-political regime (R. Goswami).

- Zero Budget Natural Farming: this method was developed in India by Shri Subhash Palekar and produced important results in terms of quality, profuse production and almost zero costs as inputs (S. Kumar).

- Family Agriculture (FA): food producing agriculture and in particular family agriculture can improve the situation of millions of people. Small holder farming is a sustainable model of food production, land management and source of income for millions of families. Local and national markets should be prioritized; agriculture and family farming strengthened and environmentally, socially and economically sustainable consumption should be promoted (World Rural Forum).

- New models of mass food production: considering the need to shift away from fossil fuel production, new models are required that will have to build on new concepts and methodologies developing the capacity of the rural people so that they can easily respond to new opportunities and enabling the farmers access to land and inputs (L. Bamidele Taiwo).

#### **IV. WHO CONTROLS FOOD PRODUCING RESOURCES AND HOW TO DEVELOP NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES THAT CAN BETTER REGULATE ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES?**

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Food production and distribution both within countries and internationally is largely dominated by the market system: participants discussed on the role of the market presenting diverse views that ranged from pro-market positions to positions supporting the exclusion of food products from international trade agreements .

Markets should be regulated through strong governance systems that allow correcting its disadvantages (including wealth inequalities, environmental impacts and womens empowerment): this means carrying out non-market activities to correct or compensate for the deficiencies of the markets, at the same time allowing us to benefit from their best features. Programs of that sort are already in place in many parts of the world, but they are not fully integrated into the food governance system (G. Kent).

There are also other major disadvantages of markets: they are biased towards urban markets and because of that bias treat producer communities like suppliers and they align naturally with political-industrial oligarchies wherever these have taken root, which means they will always drive a techno fix in place of a traditional knowledge-based one. This leads to the very unequal rise of incomes and to the now overfamiliar question: how can there be hunger when food stocks are high? (R. Goswami).

While it might very well be that the market has reduced distances between producers and consumers in global terms, the reality is that in many cases it has increased inequality, creating two main groups: those who produce and those who consume. The clear reality is that three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas of developing countries. And nevertheless, in many countries agriculture has assumed a secondary role in the political agendas of their governments (World Rural Forum).

The present agro-export model of agriculture whereby agricultural products are considered mere commodities should be changed, and agricultural products should be removed from global WTO

agreements. Any trade in food crops should be regulated in such a way as to support farmers producing crops for food in their own countries rather than supporting large corporations that are governed by shareholders from all over the world (M. van Heemstra).

Regarding the management of natural resources, the biggest problem lies in that its operation is governed under open access regimes and this in itself leads to overuse and arbitrary appropriation. In that situation, the least developed countries are excluded from the exploitation of their own resources with all the consequences that entail for the overall internal development chances. To address this apparent imbalance of power it is necessary to dismantle the traditional open exploitation system and to set up transparent mechanisms for decentralization enabling local communities to access and control their own resources. (World Rural Forum).

Specifically, the plunder of medium to high potential agricultural land by mining, deforestation by logging operations in indigenous forests, together with the slash and burn practice by rural communities, and marine reserves to mostly satisfy financial greed, have a severe impact in food security in particular and the environment in general and should be strongly limited by limiting exploitation rights and by introducing limiting measures (A. le Roux).

In many developing nations, government controls food producing resources. There is the need to put in place a number of intervention programmes that will increase rural household income, improve standard of living and reduce extreme hunger and poverty.

Examples include: the promotion of gender equity and women empowerment, the recognition of land tenure system, the access to credit facilities by the rural poor, supporting agricultural production skills in the rural people and the formation of rural cooperative groups (L. B. Taiwo).

## **V. WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED AND AT WHAT LEVEL?**

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Participants expressed general agreement on the need to involve a wide range of stakeholders in food governance systems.

No agent can be excluded. The active and coordinated engagement of all stakeholders both public and private that are willing to work under the principle of solidarity is required (World Rural Forum).

It is particularly important to include small and medium farmers actually producing food crops for local consumption as well as women, as the majority of poor involved in subsistence production are women and most of their labour is unpaid, and unsupported. Women have lower access to and control over inputs to agricultural production including credit and information and they benefit least from investments in this sector. Therefore among important actors to be involved are local NGOs who are Gender Activists and those enabling small-farmer agriculture innovations at local levels (A. Mosha).

At the same time we need a governance system that is suitably flexible to be effective under changing circumstances in the Earth's system (whether these are environmental, economic, political...) so as to ensure food security (L. Pereira).

The governance structure should run in a democratic way where the various stakeholders have equal say; i.e. such an organic network of small and medium-sized farms who have the support of the government in the form of credits, education and infrastructure they need to have access to markets (M. van Heemstra).

While on one side it is stressed that we require a true global commitment, a leadership setting clear goals and commitments which results are subject to monitoring, especially from farmers' associations and civil society, both nationally and internationally (World Rural Forum), an

important step forward is already being taken with the reform of the Committee for World Food Security (CFS).

The direction that the Committee for World Food Security (CFS) reform process has taken is enormously important because it ensures that the responsibility for addressing critical policy issues affecting food security remains in a truly multilateral forum. The World Summit on Food Security Declaration should make very specific reference to its role in addressing global policy issues affecting food supply and access, and should guarantee the resources needed for it to undertake all that is expected of it. The Committee for World Food Security (CFS), once it starts to work, should, from the outset, adopt a code of behaviour under which its members agree to subordinate their short-term national interests to ensuring that the higher-level global objective of a hunger-free world is attained. The goal of eradicating hunger will only be achieved when all countries make it a central objective of their development policies – for to do otherwise is to gamble with people's lives – more than a billion of them (A. Mc Millan).

## **VI. EXAMPLES OF GOVERNANCE FLAWS**

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### **- Importance of governance systems in Africa**

In Africa Governments commitment to agriculture in terms of investments and governance has been rather weak, as compared with other issues such as national security even in places where there are no visible threats to national security. The African Union Peer Review Process should consider including commitment to Agriculture and Food Security Governance as part of the Review criteria. Governments should be made to account for promises made to the population on food security and those that persistently renege on their promises should be sanctioned (K. Agyemang).

### **- Effects of changing cultures, lifestyles and dietary habits**

The South is often victim of attacks on its cultures, lifestyles and dietary habits by the North / West: we need to make sure that the global governance about food that we talk about, must also speak to governing those who feed us rubbish, and are allowed to get away with it in the name of profit (M. Lakhani).

In Argentina poor dietary habits are increasing that are the product of years of policies distorting the indigenous culture. It has become more and more common to see meals being prepared with high percentages of fat and little protein, supplanting the traditional "churrasco".

Another even worse phenomenon occurs in the inner parts of the country, where the lack of education impacts the tables every day. Technology and the impact of propaganda advertising the use of products that are not beneficial to health have contributed in their own way (S. Menelle).

### **- The case of soy**

Communities in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay are suffering heavily from intoxication by massive herbicide and pesticide use on roundup ready soy. People are driven from their land to the cities and the local food situation is deteriorating. NGO's like WWF, Solidaridad and Icco are effectively supporting this agro-export model and the Round Table on Responsible Soy, a forum dominated by big soy producers, traders and industry. Their criteria for so called 'responsible' soy do not question the soy agro-export model. In fact the criteria are so weak that GM roundup ready soy, grown on soil that has been recently deforested, can still be called 'responsible'. If we could convince these NGO's to no longer justify this agro-export model

things might start to change. That would give a strong impulse to the search and drive for real solutions to the food question (T. Dalhuisen).

- Food conferences often do not provide any new result and governments undertake commitments that are often neglected (A. le Roux).

## VII. RESOURCES

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### Food security governance

Committee on World Food Security

<http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/en/>

Declaration from Social Movements/NGOs/CSOs Parallel Forum to the World Food Summit on Food Security Rome, November 13-17, 2009

[http://peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/sites/peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/files/Final\\_Declaration-EN.pdf](http://peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/sites/peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/files/Final_Declaration-EN.pdf)

Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, Rome, 16-18 November 2009

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/Summit/Docs/Final\\_Declaration/WSFS09\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/Summit/Docs/Final_Declaration/WSFS09_Declaration.pdf)

Civil Society Forum

<http://www.fao.org/wsfs/wsfs-meetings/wsfs-civil-forum/en/>

<http://www.foodsovereignty.org/new/>

### Food production methods

Zero Budget Natural Farming

[www.palekarzerobudgetnaturalfarming.com](http://www.palekarzerobudgetnaturalfarming.com)

Family farm campaign

[www.familyfarmingcampaign.net](http://www.familyfarmingcampaign.net)

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