

High Level Event

Innovative Ways for Sustainable Nutrition, Food Security and Inclusive Agricultural Growth

- *Palais d'Egmont, Brussels, 25 April 2016* -

In 2015 the international community achieved significant milestones with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the universal, legally-binding, Climate Agreement. Together these global commitments can advance the achievement of inclusive and rights based development by directly confronting the injustices that underpin poverty and inequalities everywhere. The European Union supported these global commitments in its Communication "A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015".

This conference is looking at the challenges faced by the agriculture and food and nutrition security should face to meet 2030 targets: producing more food, better and affordable food, creating inclusive and sustainable growth while coping with climate change, shrinking natural resources, population growth. In order to meet those targets, root causes need to be addressed, the next generation of farmers must be able to reach their potential, both mentally and physically; farmers must also have access to knowledge's and innovation and financial services.

This conference invites dialogue around four distinct areas of that together; highlight the importance of addressing injustice while promoting inclusiveness in different ways: avoiding setbacks in the development process by reducing vulnerability and strengthening the capacity of people to cope with food crises; bolstering government leadership and capacities for nutrition; filling crucial gaps in evidence to accelerate poverty reduction through research and innovation.

1. Background

- The 17 SDGs offer an explicitly universal framework that reflects the linkages between economic, social and environmental issues, and emphasises the interdependence of individual states. This calls for a new, and renewed, global effort of cooperation, collaboration and meaningful partnership that cuts across national boundaries, stakeholders and sectors. The success of this new development agenda will require policy coherence at all levels and a refusal to work in siloes. The opportunity exists to ensure that all initiatives work to support inclusive development for poverty reduction.
- SDG 2 focuses on food and nutrition security, and agriculture. It has five specific targets: ending hunger; ending malnutrition; improving agricultural productivity and incomes for smallholders; ensuring sustainable, resilient, food production systems; and protecting biodiversity. Additional SDGs address other important aspects of food and agriculture systems, including women's empowerment and equal rights to resources, post-harvest and food losses, access to land and regulation of fishing.
- The Climate Agreement requires specific attention to agriculture. The EU is committed to supporting climate action to build resilience to climate change impacts in developing countries.
- Food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture are among the EU's top development priorities for 2014-2020 with more than 60 partner countries having prioritised agriculture in their national indicative programmes. The EU's development policy identifies sustainable agriculture

as a key sector driving poverty reduction and economic development. Within this policy context, the EU has defined sectorial priorities related to food security¹, resilience² and maternal and child nutrition³, which are elaborated in recent EU *Communications*. Furthermore, the EU has a Communication on “A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries”. The EU is pursuing four strategic priorities in the area of Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture:

1. Resilience: Reducing vulnerability to food crises and preserving livelihoods in the face of shocks and chronic stresses is paramount to supporting food insecure households and communities along the development process. Smallholder farmers are often the most affected in cases of weather extremes and economic shocks because they have limited livelihood strategies outside agriculture. Building their resilience to food crises is a central aim of the EU’s aid, and crucial to enabling a sustainable development process for people vulnerable to food deprivation.
2. Nutrition: The EU is committed to supporting partner countries in reducing stunting by 7 million children by 2025, in alignment with the internationally agreed World Health Assembly targets. The EU pledged to spend an unprecedented €3.5 billion between 2014 and 2020 to reach this ambitious goal. Enhancing nutrition governance, improving the knowledge-base, and strengthening accountability mechanisms are at the core of the EU’s nutrition strategy.
3. Innovation for sustainable agriculture: Research and innovation are necessary ingredients in addressing key constraints to the achievement of food and nutrition security goals. EU supports global and regional Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) initiatives, including the CGIAR, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), and African research organisations supporting the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process, both through funding and engagement with governance bodies.
4. Supporting inclusive agricultural growth: Transforming agriculture requires a strong engagement from the private sector to invest in areas where market gaps exist and to engage in responsible practices as part of their core business strategies. The EU is engaging in public-private dialogue to reap the full benefits of private sector involvement. EU efforts aim at catalysing impact and facilitating private sector investment for sustainable and inclusive development, supporting aid-for-trade initiatives, realising that improved access to EU markets through EU trade policy provides an important opportunity for developing countries to integrate into global value chains, and acts as a strong incentive for partner countries to adopt enabling sustainable business policies.

2. EU Initiatives

The EU has launched key initiatives to support partner countries for each of these four strategic priorities.

2.1. Resilience to global food crises – the example of El Niño in 2016

Setbacks in the development process that occur during crises and shocks can jeopardize even consolidated achievements. Food insecurity is both a symptom of vulnerability to, and a result of, crises. The 2016 El Niño climate phenomenon has been a major challenge for partner countries and a driver of food crises around the world. However, other factors, such as conflicts, migration and socio-economic shocks, have also impacted heavily on the livelihoods of people in many areas of the world, often at the same time as extreme weather events. This extreme situation calls for a concerted, global response to food crises in the world, no matter the cause.

¹ COM (2010) 127 An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges.

² COM (2012) 586 The EU approach to resilience: Learning from food security crises.

³ COM (2013) 141 Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition in External Assistance: an EU Policy Framework.

In 2016, the European Commission launched an innovative process, promoting a "Joint global food insecurity analysis" with the support of key international partners dealing with food and nutrition insecurity, namely FAO and WFP. The joint analysis allowed agreeing upon the following figures regarding the global situation of food insecurity:

240 million people, across 45 countries, are experiencing food stress in 2016; 80 million of these people are described as being in "food crisis". Over half (close to 742 million) are in countries affected by El Niño.

Lessons learned from past experience indicate the inappropriateness and ineffectiveness of diverting long-term funds to address the immediate consequences of a crisis. The imperative to address root and underlying causes of vulnerability remains as valid during a crisis as it does in 'normal' times. However, immediate emergency assistance invested rapidly in food and nutrition security, and in water and sanitation, remains essential in order to save lives.

To respond to these challenges, the EU is ready to continue supporting affected countries in tackling the consequences of El Niño and other major drivers of food crisis.

2.2. Addressing the governance and accountability gap in nutrition

Effective governance, across all basic sectors, is a prerequisite for the sustainable elimination of hunger and malnutrition. This requires concerted attention to institutional and individual capacities in partner countries, and the overall architecture within which they operate. And it requires, and rests, on strong government leadership and commitment to this. Strengthened systems and processes for planning, management and monitoring are pivotal to effective nutrition governance. Global experience around nutrition highlights the importance of political commitment and maintaining a clear and coherent focus on achieving and being accountable to measurable, concrete and sustainable results. For this reason, the EU has designed programmes and new partnerships that specifically address institutional and capacity constraints to effective nutrition governance: The National Information Platforms for Nutrition, the Food Fortification Facility and the FIRST initiative and is supporting global governance initiative for nutrition such as the SUN movement.

2.3. Innovation and Research for Development

Research and innovation are vital to drive the transformative change required to address key constraints to the achievement of food and nutrition security goals. The EU supports global and regional Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) initiatives, including the CGIAR, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), and African research organisations supporting the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process, both through funding and engagement with governance bodies.

Impacts are more likely to be achieved when research is linked to extension and innovation, and when it is closely aligned with the needs of beneficiaries. It is recognised that information flows must involve feedback loops that enable researchers to better focus their work programmes on overcoming farmers' constraints and satisfying their needs. Investment is needed to manage and share the knowledge resulting from research and farmers' experience, to promote the dissemination of new technologies to farmers through rural advisory services and the rural community, and to enhance the capacity of all stakeholders to innovate and to make informed choices, whether these are at the level of household livelihoods or national policies.

2.4 Innovative financing in agriculture

The private sector has a key role to play as a driver of inclusive and equitable growth and development. The business environment can help empower women as entrepreneurs and workers and deepen financial inclusion. The EU actively seeks to cooperate with the private sector in order to enhance economic opportunities for the poor. It encourages the private sector in partner countries to engage in responsible investment, sustainable trade, and innovative and inclusive business models that can integrate the poor

into markets as both consumers and producers. “Blending” – the combination of EU grants with loans – is recognised as an important means of leveraging additional resources for development and increasing the impact of EU aid. The EU acts as a catalyst for private financing through greater use of financial instruments such as guarantees, equity and other risk-sharing instruments for investments. The EU’s new Agriculture Finance Initiative (AgriFI) aims to increase investment in smallholder agriculture and agribusiness. Private sector engagement should result in improving the inclusiveness and sustainability of value chains in agriculture, and food security for the particular benefit of farmers currently left behind by economic opportunities.

3. Objectives of the high-level dialogue

The main purpose of this high-level dialogue is to collectively consider opportunities for innovation in food security, nutrition and agriculture to secure inclusive human development. It will do this around four specific panels: resilience, nutrition, research and financing. Each panel will help share insights and enable creative dialogue between participants structured around three key questions:

- (i) **Challenges:** What has been learned from experience with regard to the challenges to inclusive and equitable development and what do we know about how can they be creatively overcome in the post 2015 era?
- (ii) **Synergies:** How best can synergies and strategic coherence be promoted between various initiatives - such as those show-cased as well as others?
- (iii) **Partnerships:** What are the opportunities for new partnerships to be forged to reverse trends of widening inequalities, accelerate impact and reinforce accountability?

The high-level dialogue will compile findings and recommendations from the four panels and issue conclusions that can guide partner in their future support and initiatives.