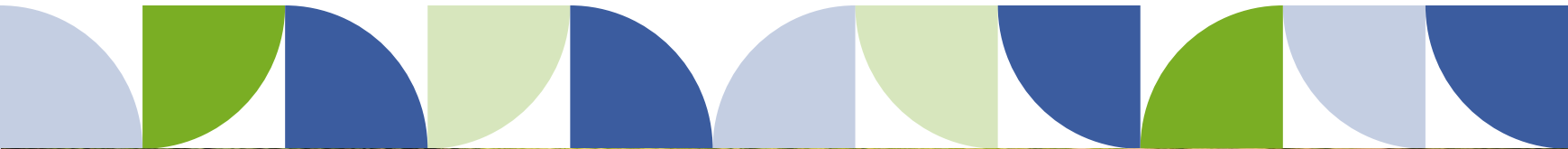




DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON COHERENT POLICIES



1. BACKGROUND

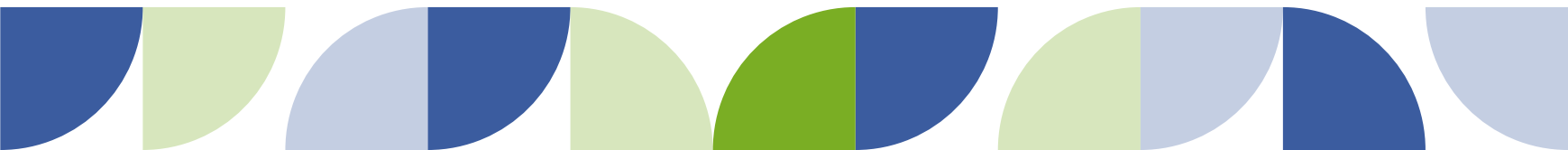
Food and nutrition security involve permanent access to sufficient, safe, health, and nutritious food at affordable prices, so that people can meet their basic needs and lead active and healthy lives. Although the **right to food is an internationally recognised human right**, it is not guaranteed for a large portion of the world's population, impacting other rights and compromising prospects for a dignified life, particularly in countries and population groups with greater poverty and vulnerability.

In recent years, the **confluence of several global crises and their impacts on food systems** (including the impacts of conflicts, climate change, post-pandemic economic shocks, etc.) is intertwined with characteristics of global supply chains (marked by inequalities and power imbalances), agricultural and food production practices (mostly unsustainable), and food consumption (evolution of diets that do not favour sustainable and conscious consumption options) that end up **reinforcing these global asymmetries and injustices**. These trends further compromise food sovereignty, that is, the autonomy of peoples to control and define their own agricultural and food policies, promoting sustainable practices appropriate to local contexts, strengthening their resilience, and respecting their diversity.

Thus, **although humanity has the resources necessary to eradicate extreme poverty within a generation, including the eradication of hunger and all forms of malnutrition**, evolution in recent years has shown a reverse trend, with the world experiencing a food crisis and the neglect of the deep and systemic causes of food insecurity. The way food is produced, supplied, and consumed today raises questions about respect for human rights, justice, and equality.

Food and nutrition insecurity is simultaneously a **cause and an effect of poverty**. Responding to hunger is a **moral, political, economic, and social imperative**, and building fairer and more sustainable agri-food systems is crucial to this goal, as well as a necessary condition for achieving the 2030 Agenda in its various dimensions.

Food and nutrition security is multidimensional and requires **systemic approaches**, addressing the various dimensions of food systems, including interconnections with **factors and impacts at the environmental, social and human level**. In this sense, actively promoting **Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)** is essential. On the one hand, it ensures that the impacts of policies related to agri-food systems (agricultural, trade, investment, etc.) on poorer countries are duly taken into account, reformulating them to mitigate any potential harmful effects. On the other hand, it allows for the enhancement of synergies between stakeholders and between policies and measures, towards the construction of global and national agri-food systems that prioritise accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability, in accordance with international human rights standards, with mutual benefits for humanity and the planet.



“This is more than a failure of systems - it is a failure of humanity. Hunger in the 21st century is indefensible.(...) We must summon the funding, innovations and global solidarity to build the food-secure and climate-resilient future that every person, everywhere, needs and deserves.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, May 2025.



Unsplash_East Timor 2023

VIDEO
What are agri-food systems?



VIDEO
Learn about the situation of Food and Agriculture in the world



VIDEO
Inequalities in agri-food systems



2. FROM PERCEPTIONS TO FACTS

We know that hunger is a persistent reality in the world, but are we aware of the concrete numbers of food insecurity in its multiple aspects? And what data and evidence are available on global inequalities in these areas? Agri-food systems are interconnected with all dimensions of global development – social, economic and environmental –, so it is important to have a substantiated, informed and conscious perspective on the facts and data that incorporate trends in this area, which can serve as a basis for defining and implementing coherent policies.

Hunger and food insecurity numbers continue to worsen: who is being left behind?

The global hunger and food insecurity situation in the world is worrying: approximately 733 million people worldwide will face hunger in 2025, which is 1 in 11 people (in Africa, 1 in 5 people). More than 258 million people, in 58 countries, are experiencing acute/very severe food insecurity (compared to 135 million people at the beginning of 2020), while food and humanitarian aid has been declining, creating a significant gap between needs and response capabilities.

Most global indicators are worse today than they were pre-pandemic: between 2019 and 2022, the prevalence of malnutrition increased from 7.9% to 9.2%, and the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity rose from 25.3% to 29.6% – these percentages are even higher in rural areas, and in the world's poorest regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa (in proportion of the total population) and Central and South Asia (in number of people) being the most affected regions.

Around 9 million people die annually from causes related to hunger and malnutrition, a large proportion of them children under the age of 5, as food insecurity is a major cause of child mortality.

Almost 1/3 of the people in the world cannot access a health and nutritious diet because they do not have the financial resources to do so (2.8 billion people), with this proportion being much higher in low-income countries (where 72% of the population cannot afford this food) than in high-income countries (where 6% of the population cannot afford these costs).



The main global factors contributing to the worsening of these trends are violent conflicts (as more than 65% of people affected by severe food insecurity live in fragile and conflict-affected countries), climate change (which could reduce crop yields and diversity by 30% by 2030) and economic shocks (affecting food availability, inflation and prices). Several of the most fragile countries have suffered from these factors simultaneously in recent years.

Not a single country has achieved its SDG 2 targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and most are moving away from achieving it. If current trends continue, approximately 582 million people will continue to face hunger in 2030, half of them in Africa.

Inequalities in agri-food systems

The inequalities in global food systems and the unequal distribution of food and resources are profound: the world currently produces enough food to feed more than the world's population, but more than a billion meals are wasted every day, and up to 40% of total food is lost or wasted along value chains.

Small farmers produce about one-third of the world's food for human consumption, but the prevalence of poverty remains much higher in rural areas than in urban areas. At the same time, lower-income countries tend to have higher percentages of their population employed in the agricultural sector – for example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, on average, 52% of people have livelihoods dependent on the agricultural sector (in the European Union, this figure is only 4% of the population), yet they remain in poverty. At the same time, African countries are food importers and highly dependent on global markets, with at least 82% of basic food imports coming from outside the continent, which exacerbates inequalities.

Harmful impacts on people and the planet

The way agri-food systems are organised means they are currently responsible for the unsustainable exploitation of highly polluting natural resources, the main cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss. About one-third of arable land is degraded, and half of fish stocks are virtually depleted. The agri-food sector currently generates about 30% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and could generate up to 50% by 2050 if not transformed. Every year, more than 25 million people suffer from acute pesticide poisoning due to intensive and industrial agriculture.

Most agricultural land is used for livestock grazing and animal feed production, not for direct human consumption. Many food products, especially meat and dairy, have a huge ecological footprint due to the unsustainable use of raw materials and water. A plant-based diet would allow us to use 75% less agricultural land globally.

The unsustainable exploitation of the planet's resources is combined with the continued increase in demand for food, goods, and services linked to or derived from agriculture (including crops, livestock, forests, fisheries, etc.). If there is no change in agricultural and food systems, taking into account increased food consumption, total global food demand is expected to increase by 35% to 56% between 2010 and 2050 – which will exacerbate existing asymmetries.

On the contrary, a global agri-food system aligned with the SDGs could generate economic value between \$5 to 10 trillion per year, create more than 200 million full-time jobs by 2050, increase resilience to climate risk and help restore ecosystems, generate more crop income and ensure nutritious and affordable food for all.

Figure: Harmful impacts of agri-food systems

Food systems overexploit and inefficiently use natural resources...



leading to an unhealthy planet...



and unhealthy people.

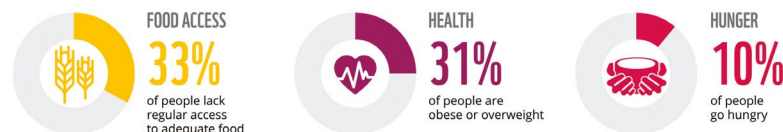


Figure 1.

Food systems are currently the number one threat to nature and people's health, which creates an opportunity for food systems to become the number one opportunity for restoring both nature and human health.

Gender inequalities

Global inequalities in agri-food systems are also gender inequalities: women represent 60% of people experiencing chronic food insecurity, generating a vicious cycle of poverty and social injustice.

At the same time, in the agricultural sector, women are overrepresented in seasonal, informal, part-time and low-wage work, receiving less social protection. Women have much less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets than men: for example, less than 15% of agricultural landowners worldwide are women, although this percentage varies greatly from country to country. In the most fragile countries, persistent discrimination in policies and practices, weak legal enforcement, social norms, and other obstacles contribute to the perpetuation of inequality, particularly in rural areas.

Fostering policies that promote gender equality is crucial for social and climate justice and for achieving more equitable and sustainable agri-food systems. Eliminating gender disparities in farm productivity and the employment pay gap in the agri-food system could increase global GDP by 1% - or almost \$1 trillion USD – contributing to eliminating hunger for 150 million people and reducing food insecurity by around 17% worldwide.

QUIZ

What do you know about
food loss and waste?



INTERACTIVE MAPS:
food crises in the world



INTERACTIVE MAPS:
food insecurity



3. COHERENT INTERCONNECTIONS

Food and nutrition (in)security is interconnected with multiple factors and impacts at environmental, social, economic, and human rights level, which positively or negatively affect people's aspirations for a dignified life, the progress of societies, and development prospects everywhere in the world. The shift towards fair and equitable agri-food systems contributes to reducing poverty, promoting quality health and education, and increasing social cohesion – and, conversely, progress in these areas is also crucial for achieving greater food sovereignty and promoting the right to food for all.

Poverty and inequalities



Poverty and food insecurity are intertwined, as people or social groups with lower income, greater economic marginalisation, vulnerability and risk of social exclusion are more affected by hunger and malnutrition, while the lack of access to adequate basic foods can keep people trapped in a cycle of poverty and deprivation.

In the countries most affected by food insecurity, it is much more difficult to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development processes, as hunger, undernutrition and malnutrition have a significant impact on health, learning and human development, productivity, and economies. Rising global food prices, both an aggravating factor and a symptom of the ongoing food crisis, represent a heavier burden for the poorest countries, where food costs constitute a larger share of household and government budgets, and where there are fewer internal capacities and financial resources to meet these increases.

A healthy population is a basic condition for economic and social development, and this depends on the implementation of the Right to Food, which in turn implies policies that promote the reduction of poverty and inequalities. The phenomenon of hunger is underpinned by several inequalities (geographical, income, gender, etc.) that are rooted in structural discrimination and imbalances of economic, social and political power. For example, promoting women's human rights by reducing inequalities in access to assets (community, family and individual) and means of production (such as land ownership) is a fundamental factor in improving the right to food worldwide.

Environment and climate change



Promoting sustainable food security is essential to protecting natural resources and the environment. Indeed, when agri-food production models are managed sustainably, they can contribute to preserving and restoring essential habitats, helping to protect watersheds, and improving soil and water quality, representing a fundamental component of sustainable development.

However, in recent decades, we have witnessed a degradation of natural resources and biodiversity, with clear repercussions on food and nutrition security. Furthermore, food insecurity has increased in areas affected by catastrophes, natural disasters and extreme events (floods, storms, prolonged droughts, pests, and diseases), exacerbated by climate change, which have an increasingly greater impact on agricultural practices and on development.

Efforts to reduce emissions in the agri-food sector must include changes in agricultural production patterns and processes before and after production, that is, throughout the supply chain. They must also include issues as varied and complex as the need to adapt to healthier and more balanced diets, reduce food waste throughout the value chain, forest management, the application and sharing of new technologies, and the need to increase adaptation and resilience to climate risk.

Human Rights



The Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition (HRAFN) is internationally recognised as a fundamental right, ensuring that everyone can live with dignity, health, and freedom – which are also pillars of human rights. Food insecurity is a violation of human rights and States have a legal and moral obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil this right.

Several other rights (to life, health, education, work, etc.) depend on this right, which is essential for the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as adequate food contributes to reducing poverty, reducing inequalities, promoting quality health and education, and gender equality. Conversely, progress in these areas is also crucial for achieving greater food sovereignty and promoting the HRAFN.

The organisation of supply chains for various agri-food goods leads to situations that can be classified as violations of the right to adequate food and other human rights. Production and processing often involve meagre wages, inadequate safety conditions, and unfulfilled labour rights. Moreover, human rights violations (such as child labour, forced labour, and conditions equivalent to slavery) often go unpunished or unidentified. Food security policies must be implemented with a human rights-based approach.

Agriculture, natural resources and sustainable production



Sustainable agricultural practices promote the conservation of natural resources and the resilience of food systems, while unsustainable practices compromise the ability to produce safe and nutritious food, even if it may seem otherwise in the short term. The promotion of intensive and industrial agriculture has contributed to the destruction of ecosystems (including deforestation) and natural resources (soil, water), the widespread or abusive use of fertilisers, pesticides, and chemicals, the loss of genetic diversity in seeds and plants, imbalances and unsustainability in supply chains (e.g. long-distance exports and the concentration of distribution), among other effects.

This is because the focus has been on the expansion, intensification, and growth of agri-food production and its efficiency – justified by the need to feed a growing global population – without considering other possible paths with less environmental and human impacts. The global agri-food system is, in fact, a mirror and product of the path of economic development pursued, based on unlimited economic growth and mass production and consumption, dependent on the extraction, processing, and use of an ever-increasing quantity of the planet's natural resources.

According to the FAO/United Nations, the shift towards more sustainable agriculture at all levels requires that agri-food systems evolve to promote increased productivity, employment and added value in these systems, implementing more efficient practices; contribute to the conservation, protection and valorisation of natural resources; protect and improve rural livelihoods, equity and social well-being; increase the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems; and be based on responsible, fair, and effective governance mechanisms that adapt to new challenges. These transformations are possible, but they require coherent and active policies so that the main objective of the evolution of agricultural practices becomes improving food and nutrition security.

Conflicts, political instability and social tension



Violent conflicts are a major factor in worsening food insecurity and food crises worldwide, directly causing humanitarian crises and forced displacement, loss of livelihoods and natural resources, disruption in trade and food supply chains. In turn, persistent food insecurity can also contribute to social tensions, political instability and conflicts. It is estimated that a 25% increase in food insecurity contributes to a 36% increase in the risk of conflict.

With the increase in conflict and the existence of more prolonged humanitarian crises and state fragility, food crises tend to become more complex, protracted, and difficult to reverse. Furthermore, wars are contributing to a geoeconomic reconfiguration of global food markets in the medium term.

Hunger and food deprivation have been used as weapons of war for many years, in a wide variety of contexts and latitudes. The United Nations Security Council recognised violent conflicts as a fundamental cause of food crises and hunger (Resolution 2417, May 2018), also classifying the deprivation of food to civilians as a war crime. This aspect also contributed to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), in 2020, recognising the importance of food aid for the pursuit of peace.

Ensuring food security is an important aspect of promoting social cohesion, reducing forced migration, and mitigating the risks of conflicts related to food scarcity. The existence of a positive and lasting peace allows for the creation of conditions for the recovery of livelihoods and the implementation of the Right to Food.

Trade and investment



Implementing trade and investment policies that address inequalities in agri-food value chains, respect social and labour rights, and provide incentives (tax, financial, and regulatory) for more sustainable practices is essential to addressing the imbalances and injustices that characterise agri-food systems today.

In recent years, the crisis factors that had been triggered or aggravated by the pandemic were further reinforced: rising international prices for basic food products and agricultural production factors, disruptions in agricultural and food supply chains, rising transportation and energy costs, increased protectionism and trade barriers (including geopolitical tensions and trade wars), and other shock effects on international markets – exacerbating global inequalities. Due to the nature of their economies, the poorest and most vulnerable countries, such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), mostly located in Sub-Saharan Africa, are highly exposed and vulnerable to shocks in international markets. This was evident with the impacts of the war in Ukraine, especially on the grain trade, with impacts on food security. Action is needed to defend a freer and fairer trade system, based on rules that do not further penalise those already being left behind.

Health and Education



There is a strong link between food security and various indicators of social and human development. Food security is a social determinant of health, that is, an external factor that influences the population's well-being: countries and communities that lack regular access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food experience a higher incidence of child and maternal mortality, stunted growth (malnutrition), compromised immune system, and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, all of which impact quality of life – and are especially worrying for the most vulnerable social groups.

Food security, in turn, is essential for people to maintain their health and fully fulfil their potential, including in education and employment. Adequate nutrition fosters learning and cognitive development and reduces problems such as school dropout, illiteracy, low educational attainment and social exclusion, which are more prevalent in contexts of food insecurity. School and academic success ultimately translates into better jobs, greater productivity, and a contribution to society.

The connection also works in the opposite direction, as investing in education is one of the most sustainable ways to promote food security in the long term. Education promotes food and nutritional literacy, motivating people to make healthier and more informed choices; technical and environmental education in rural and agricultural communities contributes to sustainable food production, improving local food security; education empowers women and young people, which impacts the nutrition of families and communities. Thus, food security, health and education reinforce each other.

ONLINE COURSE
FAO-United Nations:
Improving nutrition
through agriculture
and food systems



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE INTERCONNECTIONS:
Food and...

Climate Change



Human Rights



War



4. MAIN EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Global

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – Article 25.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) – Article 11 – reinforced by its Optional Protocol, which made the right to food binding at the international level (entered into force in 2013) and by General Comment No. 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999).

Rome Declaration on Global Food Security (1996) – defined the concept and established seven commitments that serve as a basis for achieving sustainable food security for all, as well as an Action Plan to implement these commitments.

Other international treaties: **International Convention to Combat Desertification**, **Convention on Biological Diversity** (1992), under which the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** (2022) was signed, with specific targets for 2030 and 2050.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

“We envision a world (...) where food is sufficient, safe, affordable, and nutritious”.

In this sense, we are determined “to end hunger and achieve food security as a matter of priority and to end all forms of malnutrition”, and to this end “we will devote resources to developing rural areas, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, supporting small-holder farmers, especially women farmers, herders and fishers in developing countries, particularly least developed countries”.



SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

With coherent links to SDGs 1, 3, 5, 12, 14 and 15.

The Pact for the Future (approved in September 2024 at the United Nations) establishes commitments to end hunger and eliminate food insecurity everywhere in the world (Action 3) and to support people and countries affected by related humanitarian crises (Action 15), in addition to priorities in supporting the development of the poorest and most vulnerable countries and in achieving the 2030 Agenda in its various dimensions.

European Union

Treaty on the Functioning of the EU – Part V (external action of the Union), Article 208 (development cooperation and policy coherence); Article 214 (humanitarian aid)

European Consensus for Development, non-binding – Especially Items 24, 25, 55 and 56. The EU and its Member States commit to “faster, more coordinated, and intersectoral efforts to end hunger, increase the production capacity of diversified food at local and regional levels, ensure food security, nutrition and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable.”

European Green Deal – a package of strategic initiatives to put the EU on track towards an environmental and climate transition, which includes relevant instruments related to food and nutrition security: the **Farm to Fork Strategy**, to make food in Europe healthier and more sustainable, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which also gave rise to the **EU Forest Strategy 2030**, and the **Circular Economy Action Plan**. The **European Climate Law** (2021) and the **Nature Restoration Act** (2024) establish binding obligations for Member States, including those related to agri-food systems.

Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 (representing more than 30% of the total EU budget), with each Member State having developed its own national strategic plan. A new CAP is under discussion for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework.

European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (May 2024) – incorporates respect for human rights and the environment into the policies and actions of companies in value chains.

segAli_FEC_MaM_Angola_3 (21)_Food Security



Portugal

National Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security (RCM 132/2021) – interconnects various policy instruments and reaffirms Portugal's international commitments in this area.

Climate Framework Law (2021) – establishes principles to be respected by various interconnected policies and, within the scope of foreign policy, the defence of international commitments and international cooperation and solidarity with countries of the Global South.

National Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2030. It aims to ensure global coherence in public policies, promoting a comprehensive and integrated approach to development and implementing solutions to integrate the SDGs into the actions of different sectors.

Portuguese Cooperation Strategy 2030 (RCM 121/2022)

It actively promotes Policy Coherence for Development through intergovernmental and intersectoral approaches and the implementation of RCM 82/2010 on this matter. Its sectoral priorities define interconnected objectives for environmental protection, sustainable management of natural resources, and the promotion of food and nutrition security in developing countries that are partners of Portuguese Cooperation, specifically through more environmentally friendly and resilient agricultural policies, research and practices, as well as support for sustainable food production systems, with special attention to the needs of local communities.

The EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (2023) aims to **reduce deforestation associated with products** consumed in the EU market; the **European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive** (May 2024) – incorporates respect for human rights and the environment into the policies and **actions of companies** in value chains.

SDG WHEEL
Examples of how food
security interconnects
with all SDGs



INTERACTIVE TOOL:
progress on SDG 2



VIDEO
What is the Right
to Food?



**LEARN ABOUT
THE UNITED NATIONS'**
appeals for ongoing
humanitarian crises



5. INCOHERENT TRENDS AND PRACTICES

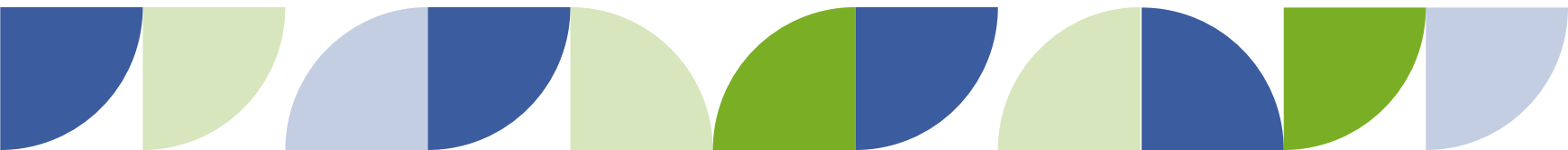
In the interconnection between food security and development, recent years have demonstrated worrying trends in policy coherence, with the persistence of unsustainable models, dynamics, and practices, the existence of human rights violations in value chain, and even the intensification of phenomena such as land grabbing, negatively affecting local communities and their food security. Despite legislative and political advances, the agricultural and trade policies of the European Union, its Member States, and private sector actors continue to have inconsistent external impacts that are particularly reflected in the poorest and most vulnerable.

Power asymmetries and concentration in the agri-food system

Almost half of the world's population depends on the agri-food sector for their livelihoods, but the sector is based on significant global asymmetries, with a highly unequal distribution of food and productive resources, which has been worsening, leaving behind a large number of stakeholders essential to food security and, consequently, to poverty reduction.

The trend of **power concentration in transnational corporations and business groups** (particularly through mergers and acquisitions of sector giants) has deepened, controlling agri-food value chains at the regional and global levels. This favours an increasingly small number of actors, with the risk of worsening inequalities. Those at the bottom of the chain (farm workers, small-scale farmers and producers, and rural communities) face significant difficulties in protecting their rights and preserving livelihoods that ensure a dignified life.

The agri-food production models that have prevailed over recent decades, almost exclusively focused on increasing efficiency and production, **favour large agricultural, industrial and intensive farms**. Thus, the largest farms, which belong to the largest 1%, now control over 70% of the world's cultivated land. **The widespread use of fertilisers, pesticides, and chemicals** (produced and marketed by the same large companies that operate in food production and distribution) increasingly threatens crop diversity and ecosystems, as well as human health. **The privatisation and concentration of control over seeds**, through the imposition of clauses protecting industrial property rights, and genetically modified organisms also pose threats to countries' food sovereignty. The expansion of large technology and digital companies in this sector (including issues such as data flow – big data) also poses a threat to food and nutrition security, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable.



In short, currently, just 4 companies control 65% of the global agrochemical market; 4 companies control over 70% of the global grain trade and 4 companies control 50% of the global seed market.

A combination of factors – including financial incentives, technological changes, regulatory shifts, etc. – have favoured the concentration of power in the sector, giving companies at the top of this system **enormous power to shape market functioning and the very context of policies and regulations** to suit their interests. This fosters dynamics that are adverse to the broader objectives of food systems, including issues such as sustainability, participation, representation, equity, and choice.

These asymmetries ultimately **reinforce other inequalities**, as people or groups historically “left behind”, who are disadvantaged and hold less power – such as women, ethnic minorities and migrants, indigenous people, those at risk of social exclusion, and rural communities themselves – are most affected by inequalities in value chains. Inequality also manifests itself in the governance of the system, including policymaking, negotiation, and decision-making processes. These people and groups are affected by economic, agricultural, and food policies, but have **little or no voice** in a debate dominated by governments and large corporations.

Pressure on land and human rights violations

In a global context where more than half of habitable land is used for agriculture and where various industries and the global agri-food system are placing increasing pressure on **natural resources and the demand for agricultural raw materials**, access to resources such as land, water, and energy is becoming increasingly strategic and important for investment, financing, trade, and economic growth. Both the increase in agricultural crops for **animal feed and intensive livestock**, and the **production of biofuels/agrofuels** (to meet “green” energy and climate targets) have contributed to this new pressure on the global food system, as they compete for these resources.



vika-chartier-iYDi7K7Ks00-unsplash_Kiriwina Island, Papua New Guinea_2020

The **large-scale expansion, appropriation, expropriation, acquisition and transfer of land in developing countries**, due to investment and trade projects, without regard for other essential social and human aspects, has led to violations of human rights and the right to development, especially in countries with greater fragility and poorer communities, including the violation of social and labour rights, the destruction of livelihoods and the disruption of local food systems, forced evictions, and land grabbing. There is abundant evidence of the lack of “free, prior and informed consent” (a fundamental right of indigenous peoples and local communities) and the loss of access to land and resources due to large-scale agreements and contracts with companies in developed countries, based on concessions for agribusiness, mining and oil exploration, in case studies in Africa, Asia and Central and Latin America – as in these investigations in Mozambique and Brazil.

In terms of **labour**, much of the agri-food industry world-wide subjects its workers to low wages, precarious work, and a lack of social protection, forced and child labour, denial of freedom of association rights, discrimination against migrant workers and gender inequality.

All of this is facilitated by the fact that many of these countries have **inadequate administrative frameworks and legal guarantees**, either too flexible or not enforced in practice, to ensure the protection of social rights, the preservation of natural resources and the environment, or the security of land property rights for local communities. In some cases, pressure from agro-industry and agribusiness relies on the complicity of some governments and other actors in developing countries, working collaboratively to implement projects and investment that involve drilling, land occupation, deforestation, and other harmful impacts on the environment and human rights.

Linked to this issue is another dimension of these inconsistencies: the **increase in persecution, crimes and violence against activists** who defend rights of local communities and/or environmental protection, in a general context of growing threats to civil society action in many contexts, and with many of the documented cases of violence pitting the State, the military and/or companies, on the one hand, and rural/local communities, on the other hand. This is particularly true in countries in Central and Latin America, but also in Asia and Africa – as is the case in Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others.

This does not mean that there are no **positive trends in responding to these inconsistencies**. In the European Union, the recent approval of legislation on these matters, such as the EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), is very important for reducing the harmful environmental impacts and the violation of human and social rights associated with products imported and marketed in the EU – although its scope is not ambitious, and there is pressure to postpone, revise and even eliminate the CSDDD. There is a growing general awareness of the impacts of projects and investment in the agri-food sector; consumers in wealthier countries are more demanding; civil society has mobilised to report and file complaints about human rights violations; and there is a greater mobilisation of peasants, producers and communities in the Global South to demand alternative options for food systems, based on food security and sovereignty. Raising awareness of these issues and empowering communities are, therefore, fundamental to transformation.



External impacts of EU agricultural, trade and investment policies

In the context of trade and foreign investment policies, transparency and accountability rules for various stakeholders regarding human rights and social responsibility are still poorly implemented in practice. The **recent approval of legislation on these areas**, such as the [EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products](#) and the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#), is crucial for reducing harmful environmental impacts and violations of human and social rights associated with operations, value chains, and trade relations with third countries. However, there is significant pressure from business and industrial sectors, as well as some Member States, to delay or even [disregard](#) the implementation of this legislation. Recent **revisions have been approved that move it away from the United Nations** Guidelines on Business and Human Rights. Furthermore, the legislation (and the [approved amendments](#)) do not adequately integrate safeguards that meet the [needs of small producers](#) at the beginning of agri-food chains in countries of the Global South, and should be combined with other measures and instruments to that end.

The EU's **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) has focused almost exclusively on sustaining farmers' income and European production, without [any of its ten strategic objectives](#) (from the CAP 2023-2027) being linked to the effects of this policy outside the European area. However, over the decades, it has had [several inconsistent effects](#) on food security and in the agricultural sectors of lower-income countries, particularly in [combination with other policies](#), such as trade, energy, environmental, food, and transportation policies, competition laws, among others.

Through strong incentives for export and excess production of some products – particularly meat, cereals and dairy products – local production and agri-food systems have been affected in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. For example, there is documented evidence of how the **European dairy industry**, whose exports are heavily supported by the EU, through dumping practices has [contributed to the destruction of the sector in several West African countries](#), a region where pastoralism is an important economic activity and many small-scale producers depend on the production and marketing of these products. Furthermore, the **model of importing soybeans** to meet the needs of the European market has had harmful environmental and social impacts, particularly in Latin America.

Current negotiations on the EU's next **Multiannual Financial Framework** (MFF) (which will include a reform of the CAP) foresee [cuts in funding for agriculture and cohesion](#). The "[Vision for Agriculture and Food](#)", presented by the European Commission, focuses on the protection (primarily from external threats), competitiveness and sustainability of the European agri-food sector, both internally and externally. This implies policies and actions with a potential harmful impact on the poorest and most vulnerable countries, including "greater assertiveness in defending exports of European products", leaving the promotion of global food and nutrition security to other instruments and policies (such as development policy). However, [difficult times are expected](#) in the area of development cooperation, as it will tend to be diluted among other external action priorities within the MFF. This is compounded by a decrease in these budgets in most Member States and the increasing exploitation of these flows to pursue security/defence and economic/commercial interests.



GUIDELINES FOR COHERENT POLICIES

Voluntary guidelines (FAO, United Nations)

**On food and nutrition
systems (2021)**



**Voluntary Guidelines
to Support the Progressive
Realisation of the Right
to Adequate Food in the Context
of National Food Security**



**OECD-FAO Guidance
for Responsible Agricultural
Supply Chains**



**Guidelines for the Support and Promotion
of Family Farming in the CPLP Member States**



**Tool: The Great Food Puzzle
Offers stakeholders a starting point
for transforming food systems**



6. CHECKLIST OF COHERENT POLICIES

The transformation of food systems requires a multifaceted approach that integrates several strategic actions, adapted to the unique context of each country, and that coherently interconnects the various related policies – from agriculture to fisheries, from trade and investment to local development, from the environment to access to justice. It also implies coherent advances in regulation, the implementation of international commitments undertaken by countries, and the accountability of stakeholders along value chains. A wide range of actors are called upon to collaborate and act in multiple fronts to advance the right to food and ensure food and nutrition security for all.

Pillars of coherent policies

Coherence with poverty reduction and international development commitments

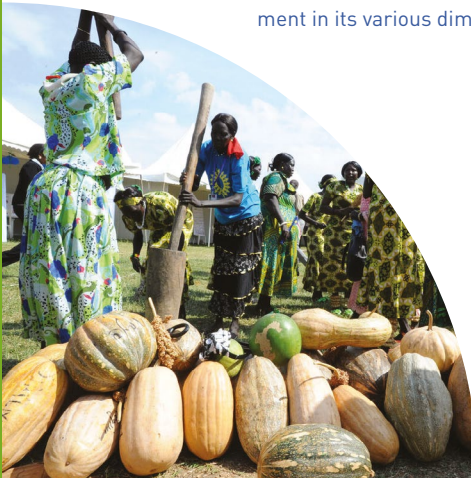
Ensure that agri-food systems evolve towards greater coherence with international principles, including through strengthening international cooperation and global regulation. Combat inequalities in agri-food systems and eliminate legislation, policies and practices, supports and incentives that are inconsistent with sustainable development in its various dimensions.

Coherence with integrated local development priorities and efforts

Sustained support for locally led and/or appropriate agri-food systems, ensuring adaptation to each context and alignment with the priorities of each country, particularly in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, promoting resilience, integrated local and rural development, and food sovereignty.

Coherence with human, social and environmental rights

Identification, liability and sanctioning of unsustainable practices and human rights violations by stakeholders in the management of natural resources and throughout the entire agri-food value chain. Concrete implementation of a human rights-based approach to agricultural, trade and investment policies.



Second Agricultural Trade Fair of South Sudan Emphasizes Food and Human Security_2012_south sudan_UN7307423_d4f_Isaac Billy

Generally:

- ✓ Actively promote **integrated, intergovernmental, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches** to Food and Nutrition Security and the pursuit of the Right to Food, coherently interconnecting the various relevant sectoral policies, the various pillars of food security – availability, access, use and stability of food – and the various level of action, from local to global.
- ✓ Align **agricultural policies, instruments, incentives and practices with sustainable development**, supporting nature-based solutions (NBS), agroecological and regenerative practices, family farming and small-scale local production, increasing efficiency and reducing food waste throughout the value chain, encouraging fair trade and supply chains, converting intensive and polluting activities, integrated territorial and rural development.
- ✓ Implement and operationalise **EU legislation on these matters, particularly on deforestation and due diligence in corporate sustainability**, to ensure that products marketed and consumed in Europe respect human, social, labour and environmental rights in the value chains of the various products, goods and services in the agri-food system.
- ✓ Ensure, in all agreements, projects and programmes, **adequate consultation and informed participation** of affected communities, respect for collective and customary land rights, and the right of communities to prior, free and informed consent regarding the use of land and natural resources at all project stages, including **simple and adequate mechanisms for reporting non-compliance, complaints, and access** to solutions by affected social groups and communities.
- ✓ Strengthen **Development Education** in this area and inform, raise awareness and mobilise about the asymmetries, injustices, and imbalances in agri-food systems and the consequences of the food crisis for people and the planet, as well as for appropriate solutions.

Within the external/international scope:

- ✓ Contribute to strengthening **multilateral and international cooperation** on these matters by deepening dialogue, diplomacy and advocacy to (i) respond to financing needs for food security in the context of humanitarian appeals and crises, (ii) better monitor commitments made at the United Nations; (iii) conclude more comprehensive and binding multilateral instruments that promote the right to food, particularly a Treaty on the action of multinational corporations.
- ✓ Ensure that the definition and implementation of relevant sectoral policies within the scope of food and nutrition security (agricultural, trade, fisheries, production and consumption, natural resources management, energy and environmental policies, etc.) pay special attention to the impact on the poorest and most vulnerable and to coherence with development objectives, in developing countries and globally – and monitoring these interconnections and impacts – in line with the PCD.
- ✓ Continue active and sustained support with a focus on priority partners of Portuguese Cooperation, to increase the resilience and empowerment of communities, support the implementation of social protection systems and strengthen regulatory capacities, improve access of small farmers to global value chains, remove discriminatory legislation and practices in access to productive resources (e.g. on women), and invest in integrated and inclusive rural development, in accordance with the priorities and needs of partner countries and the guidelines of PCS 2030. Ensure that supported projects translate into effective capacity building and technology and knowledge transfer to development partner countries.
- ✓ At the European level, promote the alignment of the European Union's agricultural, trade, and agri-food policies with the 2030 Agenda, including advocating for a more inclusive and fairer Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that promotes food and nutrition security, through: (i) systematic monitoring of its impacts on food security in developing countries; (ii) measures to minimise the local impacts of overproduction and exports of EU agricultural products to markets in the poorest and most vulnerable countries; (iii) support for the conversion of agri-food activities with a significant environmental impact (farming, intensive agriculture, etc.) and for the incorporation of more sustainable agroecological practices; (iv) reinforcement of support for local rural development and small farmers, reducing inequalities and promoting social justice.

Credits:

Title: Development and Food and Nutrition Security – Framework for Action on Coherent Policies

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Research/Editing: Patrícia Magalhães Ferreira

Graphic design and layout: Matrioska Design

Publisher: FEC | Fundação Fé e Cooperação

Place of Publication: Lisbon

Publication Date: July 2025

Photo: (cover photo) SegAli_MINUSMA Funds a Farming Cooperative in Mali_UN Photo Harandane Dicko722769

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This paper was produced as part of the project Coherence – The Axis of Development. Any opinions expressed in this paper are the sole responsibility of the author, and do not express institutional positions or bind any institution.

This document is part of the production of knowledge and awareness about PCD, complemented by other studies and papers prepared. For a more in-depth analysis on this topic, see the study [**Development and Food and Nutrition Security: Perspectives and \(Im\)balances**](#) (2021) and the website www.coerencia.pt

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