



## **International Workshop on Food Aid - Contributions and Risks to Sustainable Food Security -**

### **BERLIN STATEMENT**

#### **Preface**

*Since decades, food aid is a contentious instrument for addressing hunger and food insecurity. The workshop carefully considered the pros and cons of food aid on the basis of past and current evidence, including practitioners experiences. In particular, the workshop re-visited food aid in view of the perspectives of the ongoing WTO trade negotiations, the experience gained with the Food Aid Convention, the initiatives related to the human right to adequate food resulting from the World Food Summit, and the challenges of health crises, i.e. HIV/AIDS.*

*The "Statement" results from an open and participatory process of working groups, and from more comprehensive plenary presentations by main actors in food aid (recipient governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, international agencies, NGOs). While reflecting a fair amount of consensus, the individual workshop participants and delegates cannot be held responsible for the "Statement". It is meant to serve stimulation of further discussion for innovation and improvement of key aspects of food aid for sustainable food security.*

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Note: The Statement was tabled in closing of the International Workshop on Food Aid - Contributions and Risks to Sustainable Food Security upon invitation by the organizers by Joachim von Braun, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington D.C. ([www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)).

The workshop was hosted by the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and the Deutsche Welthungerhilfe / German Agro Action (DWHH). It was organized by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and InWEnt - Capacity Building International, Germany.

Presentations and other workshop results are available for download at [www.foodaid-berlin2003.de](http://www.foodaid-berlin2003.de), where also an electronic discussion group is set up.

## ***General Issues and Recommendations***

1. The **Millennium Development Goal** to cut hunger in half by 2015 will not be achieved with business as usual. A massive scaling up of food security actions globally, and by the countries with high prevalence of food insecurity is needed. Simply meeting aggregate food needs or GDP growth targets at national level will not suffice. Too many countries are currently regressing on the measures used to define the food security objective as stated by the FAO Food Summit. Taking responsibility for the persistence of world hunger, at international and government levels has to be more than words.
2. The **definition of 'food aid'** should not just be focused on its source of funding, or by specific transactions, such as "items donated from external donors to recipient", but should include consideration of a) all related international and domestic actions and programs, and b) the role of non-food resources brought to bear jointly with food to address key elements of hunger problems. As such, food aid can be understood as all food supported interventions aimed at improving the food security of poor people in the short and long term, whether funded via international, national, public and private resources..
3. **Food aid is only one of a multitude of instruments** in the fight against hunger. Food aided food security interventions should not be planned in isolation of other key food security policies. Food aid policy should be consistent and coherent with agriculture and trade policy. Food aid must be assessed in the broader context of food security policy, as one element of an insurance policy for the poor, which means to an exceptional measure, rather than the usual. The impact of food aid on food security of people depends on national government policies, international policies, the acuteness of local conditions, the country context, and the appropriateness of food aid management modalities.
4. Food aid policies and deliveries should **respect and promote the human right to food**. International food aid should assist countries in need, but only after they have exhausted their own related food resources. The use of food aid can contribute to the realization of the right to adequate food if it is a reliable source of support in emergencies. Such a source should be provided by the donor community, rather than individual donors be held accountable. The management of food aid must also not work counter the human right to food by undermining the capacity of people to feed themselves.
5. **Good governance of the whole food system** in developing countries will contribute over time to a decreased need for food aid. Food aid should be provided only when it is the most effective and appropriate means of assistance, compared with real, which means immediately available, alternatives including forms of financial assistance. Corruption in the food system must be countered as in any other public domain. As it affects the poorest, it requires particular attention.
6. **Civil society organizations** incl. national and international NGOs should play key roles in facilitating good governance of the food aid systems, and in grass roots needs assessment and as donors in food aid delivery.
7. **Food aid must address well-defined problems** involving immediate food shortage in flexible ways, with the aim of:

- saving lives
- protecting livelihoods and assets of the poor affected by natural and man-made disasters;
- protect livelihoods of chronically vulnerable social groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons, the disabled, AIDS orphans and the destitute;
- support complementary and synergistic efforts to improve the human resources of vulnerable people where food shortage is a major constraint..

8. Food aid allocation should be based on **sound 'needs' assessment**, involving both recipient and donors, and optimally targeted to the needy and vulnerable groups. Optimal targeting entails due consideration of the costs of targeting, and utilization of accessible timely information.

9. A “**do no harm**”-approach to food aid delivery is called for. Food aid, which involves commodities provided directly to the recipient government or its agent for sales on local markets, has often been driven by surplus disposal intentions or market stabilization policies of donor countries. The cutting back of food aid on the one hand, and its expansion on the other hand driven by international food ups and downs of prices is unacceptable. Multi-lateral food aid adds to independent response capabilities. Further strengthening of multi-lateral, undirected, food aid is therefore called for.

10. **The international governance of food aid** requires reform and streamlining in order to achieve predictability, accountability of appropriate volumes, and timely delivery of food aid. This calls for due consideration of food aid policy in the WTO Development round and re-assessment of the Food Aid Convention.

## ***Specific issues and recommendations***

### **Emergency Food Aid in the context of natural disasters, armed conflict and population displacement**

1. **Adequate attention should be put to natural disasters as well as conflicts.** Success in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and conflicts indicates that food aid has a continuing role in emergency relief, post-crisis rehabilitation, and potentially in pre-next-crisis mitigation which can contribute to the transition between relief, rehabilitation and long-term development.

2. Maintain and enhance famine **early warning systems**, and couple early warnings with timely response by donors and governments. Systems to predict climate-related humanitarian crisis are used nowadays to anticipate and prepare food aid deliveries. Efforts to improve these systems should continue, with a focus on enhancing the international community's ability to conduct rapid emergency needs assessment that pay closer attention to a) non-food needs (in addition to food), and b) times when food is not needed. This facilitates appropriate **exit strategies from food aid** and avoids dependencies.

3. Food aid in emergencies should be **restricted to situations where it is the most appropriate means** to solve the underlying problem, i.e.:
  - to provide relief in cases of protracted crisis;
  - as a contribution to strategic reserves and safety nets;
  - for operations linking relief, rehabilitation and development
4. Poor targeting, including that due to mistiming of deliveries, often reveals itself through price adjustments on local food markets as supply increases at a faster rate than demand. Food Aid should be **timely delivered in emergencies**. In this case, local purchases may have the advantage of providing food aid on time. National food policy capacities must be strengthened in developing countries to appropriately deal with food (and other development) aid instabilities.
5. While emergency relief facilitates future development, it also should be **linked with long term development action**. The provision of food aid in emergency situations should take particular account of longer-term rehabilitation objectives.

## Food aid for development

1. Food based activities are indicated in regions and under circumstances only, **where the envisaged developmental objectives cannot be met more cost-effectively or in a more sustainable way by non-food activities**. More resources need to be made available for effective 'development needs assessments' (compared with emergency needs assessments) so that those regions and circumstances can be appropriately determined and the food-versus-other-resource decisions can be more empirically informed.
2. Food aid has been shown to be useful in supporting development where it has **protected assets and prevented vulnerable people from falling into destitution**. Where food aid is the appropriate intervention in this sense, it should focus on
  - **infrastructure** development and reconstruction (by food for work),
  - **human capital** (e.g. by food for education or school meals) health and nutrition (e.g. by maternal and child health programs).
3. **School feeding** program providing large coverage but adjusted to local needs and where needed, supported by food aid should be considered. Where possible these should draw on local food production, but only with government buy-in assured.
4. The role of food aid in **poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs)** as part of food security actions warrants further attention.

## Food aid in the context of health crises, incl. HIV/AIDS

1. For poor households, **HIV/AIDS represents a massive and irreversible shock** that seriously affects their ability to sustain their livelihoods and remain food security. They are faced with significantly reduced income, fewer people available to work and an unrelenting need for food and medicine. Special attention needs to be given to orphans.
2. In areas of high food insecurity and high HIV prevalence, food assistance can provide a **safety net to catch families before they become destitute**, and thus even more vulnerable to the risk of infection, and they can support the needs of orphans and foster families in the after math of family dissolution due to AIDS.
3. Food Aid Project design should generally target people **on the basis of food insecurity rather than on the basis of their HIV/AIDS status**. As there are serious stigma issues involved, many people with HIV do not yet know that they are infected, and other non-affected households may be equally vulnerable for other reasons. The complex issue of **scaling up many pilot programs** needs due attention and learning from shared experiences.

## Food Aid management and delivery

1. Food aid has to **avoid disrupting markets, investment, and production**, whether it is delivered from overseas or purchased within the region. In order to promote local agricultural development, strengthen regional and local markets, and ensure sustained food security, consideration shall be given to using direct cash contribution for the purchase of food within the recipient country, or region. While local purchases have many benefits they too must be guided by careful assessments of availability, potential price effects, food safety, and comparative costs.
2. Food aid should be culturally acceptable and respect **nutritional needs** and eating habits, and adhere to food safety standards. Food aid must adhere to **food- and bio-safety standards**. In view of limited capacities of recipient countries, donors must only deliver food aid, which meets safety standards accepted by the Codex Alimentarius. The capacities of food and bio-safety standard assessment in recipient countries need strengthening so that countries can make informed choices, including on **genetically modified organisms**.
3. **Strengthening the role of civil society organizations and of the private sector** (in market and retail business) should be explored to facilitate effectiveness and efficiency of food aid delivery.
4. Food Aid may be a suitable instrument under certain conditions such as inefficiency of local markets or administrative structures. Because of **high transaction costs**, it is often less efficient than cash based interventions. Sustainable impact can only be reached when combined with other developmental interventions.
5. **Shared analytical frameworks are needed** in a rapidly changing domestic and international context, and increased dialogue is needed for coordinated analyses of food aid, including participatory approaches at local levels.

## **Toward reforming the food aid regimes at global and national levels**

1. Food aid should be **clearly separated from commercial trade**. The provision of food aid should not be tied directly or indirectly, formally or informally, to commercial exports of agricultural products or other goods and services to recipient countries. The WTO negotiations should lead in this direction.
2. Food aid to LDCs should be provided **exclusively in grant form** in order not to increase the debt burden of vulnerable countries.
3. Neither the **Food Aid Convention** nor the **WTO Marrakech Agreement** (of the Uruguay Round) have acted as an effective coordination mechanism for global food aid nor as an effective safety net for the poor.
4. The **Food Aid Convention has had limited and unsatisfactory impact** in reducing fluctuations or setting minimum levels of food aid needs. This raises serious questions about the credibility of the Convention in establishing a safety net and the most appropriate form of international commitments for protecting the food security of developing countries. The Food Aid Convention should arguably be discontinued in its current form after 2005.
5. Consideration should be given to replace the Food Aid Convention by a **new type of Food Aid Compact** that could be brought for example under the WTO as an element of the WTO Development Round.
6. The reform of food aid regimes at **international and at national level** should be accompanied by an international **Code of Conduct** strengthening accountability, effectiveness, fairness, and transparency, and monitored by an appropriate independent body under the auspices of for example the WTO. A participatory process toward developing such Code of Conduct, building on existing components, should be designed.
7. A reformed global food aid governance system must **not entail dominance** of global organizations in the food aid system, given the complexities of the national food security problem, regional diversity, and comparative advantages of organizational strengths.