



Federal Ministry  
of Food  
and Agriculture



Background Paper

# Policies against Hunger Conference

4 – 5 June 2024 in Berlin, 20th anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines  
for the Right to Adequate Food – Experiences, Successes and Outlook



# Twenty Years of Action: Advancing the Human Right to Adequate Food

## *Special conference “Policies against Hunger”: Why?*

In 2024, the international community marks an important milestone in the implementation of the human right to adequate food: the 20th anniversary of the “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security” adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2004.

Given the current food situation around the world, there is an urgent need for action: hunger, malnutrition and nutritional deficiency have once again been on the rise for ten years. The achievement of SDG 2 on “Zero Hunger” by 2030 is therefore in acute danger. Around 735 million people – i.e. almost one in ten people – are afflicted by hunger. The repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war against Ukraine have further exacerbated the risks for food security. In addition, multiple crises such as the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, wars and conflicts are jeopardising the realisation of the right to food.

The human right to food is part of the right to an adequate standard of living and encompasses everyone’s right to be free from hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The Voluntary Guidelines have been instrumental in fleshing out this human right for 20 years. Food must be adequate, available at all times, accessible and affordable. To home in on this objective, we need to strengthen agro-ecological practices to protect biodiversity and resources. We need to empower women and young people as well as disadvantaged groups to help shape agriculture and rural areas as equal players with the aim of incorporating the knowledge of all stakeholders. We need to provide special support to smallholder farmers to safeguard dietary diversity and traditional knowledge, and work towards curtailing the reliance on food imports. The key to implementing the right to food is a sustainable and human rights-based transformation of agri-food systems that builds on effective regional and local production.

The German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) would like to invite the participants of the “Policies against Hunger” conference to discuss the transformative power of the Voluntary Guidelines 20 years after their adoption. What might an agenda for realising the right to food by 2034 look like? What would it take to inject momentum into the realisation of the right to food in the years to come? What contribution can each and every one of us make to support this objective?

### **Aim of the “Policies against hunger” special conference**

“Only by transforming our agri-food systems will we be able to realise the right to adequate food for all”, said Federal Minister Özdemir.

Together with international and national stakeholders, politics, business, science and civil society, we want to look at the achievements and challenges in realising the right to food in the plenary session and in working parties broken down by groups of stakeholders. We want to discuss what the Voluntary Guidelines have accomplished and what we want to achieve together in the future. How can we address poverty, discrimination and social injustice as structural causes of hunger and malnutrition? Based on an international stocktaking, we will also take a look at Germany. What progress has been made in realising the right to food in Germany?

Promising policy approaches in partner countries will be presented, with the debate also covering political strategies for facilitating opportunities for participation. How can we better incorporate the voices and needs of particularly affected groups into the design and implementation of programmes? Women, children, young people, indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, agricultural workers, and landless farmers, in

particular, are hit hardest by discrimination, poverty and thus inevitably by food insecurity. We want to provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard. How young people can be involved in the design and implementation of political measures to combat hunger and malnutrition? How can women and girls obtain equal access to resources in agriculture?

However, we also want to show how aspects of the Voluntary Guidelines are already being implemented in the fields of research, education, capacity-building, innovation promotion and knowledge transfer.

We are also interested in exploring the question of a healthy food environment for everybody. Policy approaches in Germany will be presented and compared to those of other countries as examples. What policy instruments yield successes in ensuring sustainable and health-promoting diets? Where can we learn from each other and what should increasingly be the subject of governments' political focus?

This special session of the "Policies against Hunger" conference aims to take candid stock of the successes, shortcomings and future challenges in realising the right to food.

The aim of the conference is to provide concrete impetus to a rights-based transformation of food systems and to incorporate this into international processes. We want to make a practical contribution to the preparations for the 52nd plenary debate of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in October 2024 and help the CFS formulate a firm commitment to strengthening the right to food in the anniversary year. However, we also need to use the opportunity of the UN Food Systems Summit, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the Summit of the Future, G7 and G20 processes to advance the rights-based transformation of food security around the world.