



Federal Ministry  
of Food  
and Agriculture



Special Edition

# Policies against Hunger

04 – 05 June 2024 in Berlin

Twenty years of Action: Advancing the Human Right to Adequate Food

# Summary and Results

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. In 2024, the international community marks an important milestone in the realisation of this human right: the 20th anniversary of the "Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Food in the Context of National Food Security" adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2004.

At the invitation of the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Cem Özdemir, international and national stakeholders from politics, business, science and civil society came together to discuss the achievements and challenges faced in implementing the right to food. The conference participants engaged in a series of panel sessions, working group discussions, and project presentations on the application of the Voluntary Guidelines. These discussions focused on the achievements of the Guidelines and the future goals regarding their implementation. Participants and speakers presented promising policy approaches, discussed political strategies for participation opportunities and highlighted nexus between poverty, discrimination and food insecurity. This was the first time that the Policies against Hunger Conference also discussed the realisation of the right to food in Germany, building on the groundwork laid by the stocktaking at international level.

This document summarises the proceedings, content and results of the conference. This summary rounds up individual and collective thoughts, ideas, suggestions, concerns and advice. However, it does not necessarily represent the consensus of all conference participants or the opinion of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

# Day 1

The conference was officially opened by **Cem Özdemir**, the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, **Jochen Flasbarth**, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and **Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile**, Chair of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

After further introductory remarks by the Chairman of the conference, **Michael Windfuhr**, Deputy Director of the German Institute for Human Rights, the keynote speaker **Maurizio Martina**, Deputy Director of the FAO, set the scene for the two conference days.

The first panel discussion, which took place in three rounds, focussed on the topic „The right to adequate food as a compass for a human rights-based transformation of food systems: successes and challenges“.

## **Panel 1: The right to adequate food as a compass for a human rights-based transformation of food systems: successes and challenges**

In the first panel, **Chafik Ben Rouin**, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), **Tilman Brück**, Professor of Economic Development and Food Security at the Humboldt University of Berlin, **Margot Van der Velden**, Regional Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) for West Africa, and **Shantanu Mathur**, IFAD, discussed the extent to which the “Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Food in the Context of National Food Security” have been implemented so far, what has been achieved and what obstacles remain.

### **Key messages:**

- The right to food is necessary, but not sufficient, to reduce hunger and food insecurity. Hunger and food insecurity are multidimensional, i.e. they are influenced by many different factors in isolation or in combination. Since the causes are so different, different solutions are also necessary.
- Humanitarian aid is often indispensable in conflict situations. In the long term, however, the aim must be to find sustainable solutions. For example, soils must be made fertile and small

farmers must be guaranteed access to new and sustainable technologies.

- While hunger has steadily been on the rise over the last decade, large food and agribusiness corporations have been making record profits. One of the reasons is the increased speculation with food. Companies must also respect human rights and should be held more accountable by governments.

- In order to promote the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines at national level, various institutions must receive financial support. In addition to government institutions, this includes other networks, aid organisations and advice centres.

- When it comes to malnutrition, the focus is too strongly on the individual with unhealthy eating habits. However, the focus should be on possible measures by governments and institutions.

In the second round, **Pramod Koirala**, State Secretary in the Nepalese Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Development, **Valéria Burity**, Special State Secretary for the Coordination of the Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme in the Ministry of Social Development (MDS), **Mary Karanu**, member of the Kenyan Right to Food Coalition, and **Daniela de Ridder**, Member of the German Bundestag, placed the focus on the particular achievements and challenges in four countries on four different continents.

### **Key messages:**

- In Nepal, after 10 years of negotiations, new regulations have come into force to help enforce the right to food. Around 40 per cent of the population are affected by food insecurity, which is partly due to the complex agricultural situation that Nepal has as a mountainous landlocked country. The aim of the regulations, which have been implemented with the help of civil society, is to guarantee access to food for everyone.
- In Brazil, President Lula has made the fight against hunger a top priority. Brazil aims to eliminate food insecurity by 2026. To this end, the Zero Hunger Programme launched by Lula in 2003 has been reinstated. A comprehensive 80-points plan was drawn up for this purpose. Reducing inequality is central to the programme.

- In Kenya, the right to food is enshrined in the constitution. However, a legal framework to actually enforce it is still lacking. Its implementation also requires more participation and involvement. In addition, there needs to be more support for vulnerable groups.

- There are also problems with the implementation of the right to food in Germany. This is particularly due to socio-economic inequality, insufficient support for smallholders and local agriculture, and a lack of information about unhealthy foods.

The third round, with **Paula Gioia**, member of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL), **Michael Stiefel**, Project Manager “Participation of people experiencing poverty” at Diakonie, **Mildred Nadah Pita**, Head of Public Affairs Science and Sustainability Africa at Bayer AG, **Moritz Tapp**, Vice President German National Youth Council, focused on the situation in Germany.

#### Key messages:

- It is not only in poor countries that there is a lack of implementation of the right to food. Even in rich industrialised nations such as Germany, many people are threatened by food insecurity and particularly malnutrition.
- Relative poverty is a major factor in this. One in five children in Germany and one in four people under 25 are at risk of experiencing relative poverty compared to the rest of the population in Germany.
- Social security benefits in Germany are seen to be strikingly insufficient for a balanced and healthy diet, particularly in view of the sharp rise in food prices. The same was said with regard to pensions.
- The fight against poverty is key to realising the right to adequate food. The idea of introducing a socio-ecological subsistence minimum was presented as a possible avenue for combating poverty.
- It is also important to look at food producers. It was said that smallholder farmers in particular lack sufficient support.
- As smallholders are in competition with global market prices, their turnover typically does not even cover their production costs.

- There is often no alternative to selling small farms to large companies. This type of land grabbing must be countered by providing financial support to smaller farms. Monopolies jeopardise the right to adequate food.

#### Tête-à-Tête

In a tête-à-tête, **Michael Windfuhr** and **Renate Künast**, who served as Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture at the time the Voluntary Guidelines were adopted, then looked back on the past twenty years. They discussed the reasons why it was not possible to enshrine the guidelines as binding law and why they initially attracted a lot of criticism, as were the great achievements that were ultimately made despite the voluntary nature of the guidelines.

#### Working Groups

Six working groups consisting of representatives from civil society and indigenous peoples, the private sector, science and politics discussed three leading questions:

1. What is needed to accelerate the implementation of the right to food?
2. What could a right to food agenda look like by 2034?
3. How can stakeholders make a concrete contribution?

#### Civil society and indigenous peoples

1. To strengthen the implementation of the right to food, political will and accountability for governments are essential. “Soft law” must be transformed into “hard law”. Violations of the right to food must be prosecuted. Furthermore, implementation requires a reduction in the influence and power of large corporations. It is also important to sensitise rights holders. The voice of vulnerable and marginalised groups must be heard. Concepts and guidelines must be translated into local languages.
2. Structural problems must be addressed in an agenda leading up to 2034. Food sovereignty, decolonisation and agroecology are particularly important in that respect.

3. Stakeholders must demand accountability from governments, raise awareness of the right to food, publish studies and data, form alliances and advocate for genuine participation. Furthermore, violations of the right to food should be documented.

#### *Private sector*

1. Currently, national strategies are particularly necessary, but more decentralised and diversified trade relations would also help. Investment in agricultural research must be increased. Farmers' organisations must be strengthened.

2. It is essential that local communities are involved and regional circumstances are taken into account.

#### *Science*

1. Progressive universities that put the right to food on their agenda and interdisciplinary exchange are needed. For example, the University of Barcelona recently became the first institution to collect data on food insecurity in Spain. One of the founders of CONSEA was a professor of economics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

2. It is also important to ensure the global availability of phosphate.

3. Stakeholders can contribute to improving data availability and quality. Furthermore, science could become more involved in human rights reporting.

#### *Policy-makers/Politics*

1. Commitment and participation are key to the implementation of the right to food.

2. No one must be left behind, even if some countries refuse to implement the right to food in their political agenda.

3. Above all, local synergies must be utilised. Neighbouring countries can sometimes be more convincing in implementing an idea than international stakeholders.

#### *Project presentations*

The presentation of various local projects to strengthen the right to food by representatives of civil society rounded off the first day of the event. Projects on peace-building, sustainable agriculture in the Philippines, land tenure security in Sierra Leone, water management in Sri Lanka, agroecology in Senegal and school meals in Peru were presented.

# Day 2

## **Panel 2: Healthy eating environment for everyone: Which government measures and approaches are proving successful for a sustainable and healthy diet?**

**Stephanie Wunder**, Team Leader Food and Sustainable Nutrition at Agora Agrar, **Fatima Hachem**, Senior Nutrition Officer at FAO, Laila Lokosang, Senior Advisor for Food Security at the African Union, and **Eva Bell**, Head of Department „Consumer Health Protection, Nutrition, Product Safety“ at the BMEL, discussed challenges in the implementation of nutrition strategies by governments in the second panel of the event.

### **Key messages:**

- Germany has adopted a new nutrition strategy that builds on and develops other strategies and measures. Children and young people are the key focus groups of this strategy. The nutrition strategy includes the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group (IMAG) on sustainable and health-promoting nutrition. The objective is to strengthen networking between the relevant ministries and work together efficiently to make good food more accessible to all.
- Limited available resources are a major challenge when it comes to transforming agricultural and food systems globally. The food industry must become more sustainable. It must be organised in a way that respects the planetary boundaries. This requires more resources, more measures and more monitoring.
- The latter is essential, as solutions can only be developed once problems have been sufficiently analysed. More studies and surveys need to be carried out.

## **Panel 3: Participation as a prerequisite for change: What formats and participation models are needed to implement the right to adequate food?**

**Elisabetta Recine**, Chair of CONSEA, **Antje Risius**, Member of the German Bundestag, **Gundula Oertel**, board member of the Network of Food Councils Germany, and **Madina Sadirnova**, CSIPM, spoke about their experiences with civil society participation in the food system.

### **Key messages:**

- The Brazilian experience with participation in food issues is one of the most positive examples of democratic governance in national food systems. CONSEA was able to play a key role in the elaboration of national strategies for the implementation of the right to food due to its structural integration into public policy. CONSEA has been an important platform for overcoming hunger and malnutrition in Brazil.
- In 2023, the German Bundestag adopted a temporary citizens' council on food issues. Unlike in Brazil, the council was not structurally integrated into a system of public policy, but presented its findings in the form of a citizens' report.

After a speech of thanks by **Claudia Müller**, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the chair of the conference, **Michael Windfuhr** handed over his recommendations to **Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile**, CFS, and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Ms Jezile closed the conference with an emotional speech highlighting the need for more measures to realise the right to food.

The results and recommendations by Michael Windfuhr are attached to this report.

For further information, presentations, speeches, impressions and a video covering the outcomes of the conference, please go to: [www.policies-against-hunger.de/en/](http://www.policies-against-hunger.de/en/)

# Conclusions

The special edition of the Policies against Hunger Conference used the 20th anniversary of the Right to Food Guidelines as an occasion to assess progress, renew commitments, and shape the future agenda on the right to adequate food. The conference underscored the importance of integrating human rights, particularly the right to adequate food, into food security, nutrition, and agricultural policies. Moreover, for the first time in this conference series, this special edition also looked at the right to food in Germany, and more specifically, at poverty-related food insecurity. Participants learned that food insecurity has many different faces and is not confined to developing countries but also poses a challenge in industrialised countries such as Germany.

Thanks to a broad and fruitful as well as honest exchange with a variety of contributions from different experts and stakeholders from many parts of the world, the conference addressed a whole range of important topics related to the realisation of the right to food – from practical causes to human rights at the UN, to national legislative measures, nutrition strategies and school meals.

Bringing together diverse voices ensured that the discussions were inclusive and reflected the full range of challenges and solutions related to food security. The conference demonstrated the indisputable benefits of collaborating with groups directly affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, bringing local knowledge and practical expertise to policy discussions. This guarantees that strategies are based on first hand experiences, making them far more likely to be effective. Many conference participants appreciated seeing this inclusive approach in action at the conference. This fact reinforced the BMEL's conviction that the CFS, represented at the conference by its Chair Nosipho Jezile, as an inclusive and integrating platform should be given high priority in addressing the challenges raised.

It became clear that fulfilling the right to food requires not only a holistic political and social approach, but also distinct political will, political responsibilities, and accountability. It was also found that the 2004 Voluntary Guidelines already

addressed a whole range of relevant aspects such as natural resources, agricultural practices, access to land, social security, food safety regulations or access to markets.

Moreover, the conference highlighted the critical need for stronger interconnections between various international processes and bodies working on food security and human rights.

The BMEL shares the conference's emphasis on the pivotal role the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) plays in this regard and on the overall importance of international cooperation and coordination, interlinking international processes, and cooperating with affected groups. By fostering connections and collaborations between UN organisations based in Rome, New York and Geneva, the international community can develop more effective, sustainable, and equitable solutions to global food insecurity and malnutrition challenges. It became clear that the CFS with its very inclusive strategies that strengthen the realisation of the right to adequate food must be the nucleus of a more holistic global cooperation governance for food security.

The CFS in its role as global policy coordination platform should therefore deepen its links with other UN fora on issues of high relevance for food security. These include addressing the planetary environmental crises, especially climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, maintaining healthy soils, and stopping desertification.

We will work to ensure that the insights and commitments of this conference are fed into the future agenda on the right to adequate food and contribute to meaningful changes in the fight against hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The BMEL is, in addition to that, dedicated to continuing its work at national level to further deepen and strengthen the understanding of and realisation of the right to adequate food.