



Background paper WG 1: Diversification

Global situation

Malnutrition affects all countries in one form or another. A diverse and varied diet is key to avoiding malnutrition in all its forms. Beside staples like rice, maize and wheat, adequate nutrition also needs vegetables, fruit, legumes, oils and animal-based foods. It is only possible to improve nutrition sustainably if a variety of diverse, culturally accepted, sustainably produced, safe foods of high nutritional value is available and accessible all year round.

Agricultural production is vital for diversifying diets and nutrition. Local and smaller producers are particularly reliant on sustainable and resilient food systems to diversify the crops they grow and consume. Trading activities that promote the prosperity of everyone and accommodate and support the role and situation of family farms can encourage exchange and help make diversified food available everywhere all year round. However, some sections of the population, in particular disadvantaged population groups, do not have secure access to adequate food.

WG 1 focuses on identifying the conditions that are required to encourage sustainable, resilient and diversified agriculture and the approaches that are suitable for facilitating rural and urban populations' access to healthy, diverse and culturally accepted food, both now and in the future, and for realising the right to adequate food.

Priority issues:

I. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture

Ever greater attention is being paid internationally to making agriculture more nutrition-sensitive and focusing on the entire food system. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture attempts to view agriculture from the perspective of the sustainable nutritional effects it has on the population, and to adjust production accordingly. The aims include incorporating food of high nutritional value into the production system for consumption and supporting existing production of these foods both locally and globally. The focus for agricultural production in this regard is on growing local, nutritious varieties, promoting sustainable cropping systems and adapting cultivation to the needs of the different population groups. Successful approaches include for example the cultivation of suitable vegetables and legumes in rural regions and urban and peri-urban gardens. The purpose is to increase varieties in production, marketing and consumption over the



year by supplying nutritious products and making these accessible all year round. This sustainably strengthens food sovereignty and diversity. Climate change is putting great pressure on the ability of smallholders to grow food and is minimising yields in some parts of the world. The cultivation of a wide range of resistant crops suited to local climatic conditions and nutritional habits is an effective strategy for combating the effects and causes of climate change and at the same time for utilising the diversity of crop production to develop resilient agriculture and diversified diets.

But nutrition-sensitive agriculture means more than just diversified production. It also includes strengthening the rights of women employed in the agricultural and food sectors, including their access to and control of natural resources and services, reducing the workload on women, and promoting a greater division of labour in respect of caring for good nutrition and the health of all people, as these all constitute important cross-cutting issues for the development of strategies to diversify the production and consumption of a range of high-quality food and hence ensure good nutrition.

II. Closer link agriculture, nutrition and health (cross-sectoral approach):

Strategies aimed at ensuring constant access to nutritious food also require a clear analysis of target groups so that the food reaches the corresponding population groups in accordance with their needs. The nutritional situation depends not only on supply, access and consumption of food but also on a healthy and hygienic environment, adequate care and a good health status.

The factors that determine food security and nutrition therefore also indicate that combating malnutrition involves different sectors; these sectors must work together, and the focus must be on all these sectors concurrently. Beside agriculture regard must, for instance, be given to investments in the fields of education, health, drinking water and hygiene, too.

Conversely, attention must also be devoted to the influences of agriculture on these areas; for instance, (small) irrigation systems that promote the diversification of food production may at the same time increase the risk of malaria. Or the access of women to resources may be reduced if projects shift production toward male-dominated crops and animal products.

Using partnerships, cross-sectoral policies, strategies and programmes to link up these sectors is a key challenge in adjusting and adapting policies in respect of all sectors and stakeholders. General conditions and global guidelines for sustainable, nutrition-sensitive production that focuses on nutritional intake and dietary diversification could, in cooperation with nutrition-sensitive activities in other sectors, have considerable influence on sustainably improving the nutritional situation.



Guiding questions:

1. What scientific and empirical approaches and practices help improve daily consumption and the diversification of supply?
2. How can this lead to and promote win-win situations such as greater agricultural resilience?
3. What synergies and challenges exist in respect of processing, women empowerment and nutrition education?
4. What policy framework is needed to promote diversification and to closer link agriculture, nutrition and health?

Facilitator: Khaled El Taweel, Chair of OEWG on Nutrition (CFS)

Rapporteur: Gina Kennedy, Bioversity International

Inputs:

- **Katja Kehlenbeck**, Expert on neglected underutilised crops, Rhine-Waal University
- **Mamadou Diop**, Action contre la faim (ACF); West Africa Regional Office
- **Tshilidzi Madzivhandila**, Director Policy and Research, FANRPAN - Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

References (selection):

De Schutter, Olivier (2011): The Right to an Adequate Diet: The Agriculture-Food-Health Nexus', UN Doc A/HRC/19/59

FAO (2013): Key Recommendations for Improving Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems. Rome, Food and Agriculture Organisation.

IFPRI; Concern Worldwide; Welthungerhilfe; IDS (2013): Welthungerindex 2013. Herausforderung Hunger. Widerstandsfähigkeit stärken, Ernährung sichern. Bonn / Washington DC / Dublin.

Vernooy, Ronnie (2014): Seeds of adaption. Climate change, crop diversification and the role of women farmers. Bioversity International Publications.

World Bank et al. (2013): Improving Nutrition through Multisector Approaches. Agriculture and Rural Development. Washington