“Good Governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development”
Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, HDR, 2002

What Is Governance For Food And Nutrition Security?

Governance for Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) refers to the set of relationships from which the various levels and sectors of society and government interact to adopt agreements that define and regulate the food system for achieving nutritional well-being and eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

Good governance for FNS exists when the regulatory and implementation framework that drives the food system reflects and implements the agreements achieved by different sectors of society acting in the public interest.

Good governance for FNS is underpinned by principles such as responsiveness, accountability and transparency, participation, effective management and commitment, which guarantee the Right to Food. Good governance ensures that shared goals are implemented to achieve the greatest benefit for all, but in particular, for those who mostly need them.

Achieving good governance for FNS implies an integrated, inclusive and holistic approach that coordinates the actions of different sectors, stakeholders, institutions and policies creating a framework of trust, coherence and multi institutional collaboration dedicated to FNS Goals.

Good governance must be seen as a goal as well as a means to a goal in the sense that the process to achieve good governance is as important as the result of attaining good governance. This suggests that the process of building good governance needs to establish neutral forums and platforms in which all sectors and stakeholders of society are included in building a shared vision that drives the process of good governance.

KEY FACTS

FAO work on Governance for FNS in the Caribbean is focused on four major areas:
1. Enhanced political commitment for FNS by improving public policy for FNS.
2. Support for the establishment of Parliamentary Fronts that promote bipartisan agreements for continuity and sustainability of FNS Programmes.
3. Strengthening Public Policy and Programmes, such as School Feeding Programmes, which are one of the most relevant public policies for enhancing FNS; and
4. Promoting Partnerships, including South-South Cooperation, as a key instrument for facilitating technical and financial support for enhancing governance for FNS.
It is important to note that governance is a process that occurs at three different levels:

a) **Politics**: is related to the political processes and spaces where different sectors and stakeholders of society gather together to build consensus and reach agreements on areas of social interest. For good governance, political relationships need to be balanced and fair. All parties must have equal access to information to ensure that they are capable of contributing effectively to productive dialogue and decision making to advance public interest. This requires strengthening of capacities across all sectors of society.

b) **Policy**: is related to the regulatory frameworks that are expressed as legislation, strategy, action plans or public policies. These instruments enable public and private sectors to develop adequate responses to public interest matters.

c) **Polity**: refers to institutions that have the responsibility to organise, structure and coordinate the actors across different organisations, communities, individuals sectors and stakeholders to promote more effective political process and ensure implementation of public policies.

**Good governance is developed through a systematic approach which includes:**

a) Formulation of the problem to be addressed;

b) Placing the problem in the wider political agenda;

c) Drafting public policy which is responsive to the problem;

d) Promoting political decisions for adoption and implementation;

e) Ensuring Policy and programme implementation, which is probably the most difficult task; and

f) Evaluation and revision of policies which facilitate adjustments for more effective implementation.

**Governance for FNS in the Caribbean**

Caribbean leaders have indicated their commitment to work towards eradicating hunger and malnutrition and to achieving Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). They have also expressed their political commitment by adopting global regional and national frameworks for ensuring governance for FNS.

The main commitments include:

**Liliendal Declaration** of 2009, where Caribbean Heads of State recognised the need to enhance integration and a multi-sectorial approach for the achievement of a shared vision, goals and actions, working in strategic partnership with others.

In 2010, the CARICOM Council on Trade and Economic Development (COTED) adopted the **Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNS)** as a mechanism “to ensure that the regional food production, processing, distribution, marketing, trade, and food safety and agricultural public health system are capable of providing safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food for the Region’s inhabitants at all times, thereby achieving food and nutrition security”.

At the global level, governments agreed to summit declarations such as the World Food Summit Declaration (1996) Millennium development goals (2000) and the voluntary guidelines for the Right to Food (2004). At the national level, countries have prepared and adopted National Food and Nutrition Security Policies and Action Plans.
How does the FAO contribute to Good Governance for FNS in the Caribbean?

FAO is contributing to the efforts of the Caribbean to become a region that is free of hunger and malnutrition, where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

FAO’s work on Governance for FNS in the Caribbean is focused on four major areas:

I) Enhanced political commitment for FNS by improving public policy for FNS,

II) Support for the establishment of Parliamentary Fronts that promote bipartisan agreements for continuity and sustainability of FNS Programmes.

III) Strengthening School Feeding Programmes, which are one of the most relevant public policies for enhancing FNS; and

IV) Promoting Partnerships, including South-South Cooperation, as a key instrument for facilitating technical and financial support for enhancing governance for FNS.

I. Enhanced political commitment for FNS

To enhance governance and develop a supporting public policy framework that embodies the political commitment of the region to FNS, the FAO has undertaken interventions at both the regional and national levels in the Caribbean.

Regionally, FAO has contributed to strengthening the institutional capacity of the two main supranational bodies - CARICOM and the OECS. These two entities, along with their 14 member countries have a shared vision for FNS, through the establishment regional Food and Nutrition Security Plan.

At the National level, 11 national FNS Policies and Action Plans have been prepared and are at different stages of endorsement. These provide a basic framework for a structured and integrated approach to advancing FNS at the national level.

Also at the national level, the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI), has taken root. This initiative refers to the commitment adopted by some Latin American and Caribbean countries to eradicate hunger by 2025. In the Caribbean, four States have launched national Zero Hunger Challenge initiatives, starting with Antigua and Barbuda which began in 2012. Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are currently in the process of implementing their programmes and St. Lucia has launched its Zero Hunger Challenge and is in the process of developing its action plan, with FAO support.
Governance mechanisms for the implementation of the Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative in the Caribbean

FAO supports the Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative (ZHCI) in the Caribbean through five general areas:

1) Development and implementation of the ZHC Initiative; 2) Support expansion of agricultural sector and pro poor employment; 3) Promotion of small scale aquaculture for food security and rural development; 4) School Feeding Programme; and 5) National food and nutrition strategy and action plan for all FAO CARICOM countries. This initiative is underway in four countries.

- **Antigua & Barbuda**: was the first country to launch its ZHCI in 2012, and the mechanism that was put in place was a broad based Technical Management Advisory Committee (TMAC). Responding at a technical level, the TMAC coordinates activities and actions that are being undertaken by different sectors of government to ensure cohesion and synergy of results.

- **Grenada**: has established a National ZHCI Authority within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. The Authority was assigned the mission to develop a programme to integrate the elements which will form a comprehensive and substantial strategy for eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the nation.

- **St. Vincent and the Grenadines**: The Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, Forestry, Fishery and Rural Transformation, is leading the implementation of the national ZHCI Programme, through its Rural Transformation Unit. This primarily involves efforts to articulate and coordinate actions from the different sectors of the Government and civil society in order to effectively implement the ZHCI programme.

- **St. Lucia** has recently launched its ZHCI, and is currently developing the programme to ensure implementation of the different areas which will compose the national strategy.

II. Support for the establishment of Parliamentary Fronts

The Parliamentary Front against Hunger (PFH) in Latin America and the Caribbean is a space for dialogue and discussion that brings together members of Parliament in the region. Its aim is to build capacity of parliamentarians to influence the development of institutional frameworks to fight hunger in a coordinated manner, bringing together all aspects of governmental frameworks, private sector and civil society.

The Parliamentary Front at the national level creates a neutral space where members of different political parties in Parliament work on common, shared visions and principles committed to participatory governance.

The Parliamentary Front against Hunger takes advantage of the influence that Parliamentarians can wield on legislative bodies to position the issue of hunger and food insecurity as a top priority in political and legislative agendas. In this way, it is possible to establish effective institutional frameworks that address food security as a non-partisan issue, supported by both parliamentarians from government and opposition.

On September 2015, St. Vincent and the Grenadines was the first country in the Region to establish its national chapter of the Parliamentary Front. In doing so, the Government and Opposition have committed to join efforts in reducing hunger and undernourishment to zero, including through the promotion of more inclusive production and fostering greater equity in the distribution of benefits.

III. Strengthen School Feeding Programmes

School Feeding Programmes in the region have served as excellent examples of how policies and programmes have been strengthened by improved governance. Special note is taken of the experience of St. Lucia, in addressing governance in its School Feeding Programme. Through the collaboration
exercised in an inter-ministerial School Feeding Committee, the country has advanced the development of the school feeding programme to assist more students, provide an improved quality of nutrition, and has also developed a structured framework for private-public sector partnership. The Committee's partners include the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Health, Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment, and the participation of the private sector: Each partner has realized specific benefits from the collaborative efforts:

a) **Education**, which is the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the Programme and the authority of the schools where the programme takes place, has noted that the programme provides opportunities for increasing school attendance and improving school performance.

b) **Agriculture** notes an opportunity for enhancing market opportunities for national producers, with special consideration to small farmers and producers. The Ministry sees the potential to revitalize agricultural development and tackle the food import bill through increased local consumption.

c) **Health** recognizes the need to improve healthy eating habits among the population, particularly in children. St. Lucia, as in many other Caribbean countries, is facing an increasing trend in obesity and NCDs which is related to food and dietary patterns, which cause a high expenditure on health care and negatively affect the quality of life of the country’s citizens.

d) **Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment** notes that the school feeding programme is an important and relevant tool for enhancing social inclusion.

e) **Private sector and Partnerships**: Involving the private sector in the School Feeding Programme has been an innovative experience, seldom found in the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Following a regional workshop in which representatives from school feeding programmes of several countries participated, representatives from the private sector in St. Lucia contacted the Government authorities to express their desire to be part of the platform to be established for strengthening the programme. They contributed by being part of the school feeding committee as well as by providing financial support for 11 schools across the island to upgrade their school feeding infrastructure.

**IV. Promoting South-South Cooperation**

One of the most remarkable outcomes of the initiative to strengthen governance for FNS in the Caribbean has been the participation of new international cooperation partners to the Region, such as Brazil, who have brought a range of useful experiences. South-South cooperation has become a dynamic experience of cooperation characterized by developing countries supporting other developing nations in areas where the provider and receiver of cooperation see opportunities for collaborating in strategic areas.

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are partnering together under international agreements and instruments, such as the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025, the CELAC (Community of Latin America and Caribbean states) Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan, and the Zero Hunger Challenge, under the United Nations. Through these and other instruments, common goals are pursued in a collaborative and cooperative manner.

FAO has facilitated this cooperation process in the field of governance for Food and Nutrition Security, particularly through South-South Cooperation from the Governments of Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela to the countries of the Caribbean.

- **Brazil Cooperation**: is supporting initiatives to improve School Feeding Programmes, Family Farming and Governance for FNS. The beneficiaries of this cooperation have been St. Lucia, Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda. The Brazilian Cooperation Programme is also expanding its cooperation to Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Guyana and Belize.

- **Chilean Cooperation**: Jamaica and Guyana are working together with the Government
of Chile in the area of early childhood nutrition and wellbeing, with focus a breast feeding and nutritional surveillance systems.

- **Mexican Cooperation:** under the recently launched Mesoamerica sin hambre Programme, Mexico, is partnering with Brazil to provide technical support to the Government of Belize to strengthen the school feeding programme in the Toledo district.

- **Venezuela Cooperation:** several countries in the region are to be supported in the areas of a) strengthening social and farming organizations; b) strengthening intra-regional trade; and c) supporting countries to develop FNS proposals to be financed under the PetroCaribe fund.

## Conclusion

Caribbean Member States have expressed their political commitment to achieve FNS by developing national and regional institutional arrangements that result in more coordinated and effective responses to FNS challenges. Good governance promotes participation through an inclusive process of public dialogue and public private sector collaboration.

FAO will continue to provide support to Caribbean Member States in their efforts to strengthen governance for ensuring better coordination, inclusion and collaboration between stakeholders and sectors, with a commitment to increase Food and Nutrition Security.