WHAT

The vast majority of people living in rural areas have no access to social protection. It is now widely recognized that social protection systems are essential to any short- and long-term strategy aimed at eradicating hunger and rural poverty. These systems support poor and vulnerable households overcome undernourishment by providing direct access to food or the means to buy food. At the same time, properly designed social protection interventions can help improve agricultural productivity, strengthen local rural economies, empower rural women, and promote social inclusion, thereby reducing rural poverty.

HOW

FAO supports countries in designing and implementing social protection mechanisms that foster food security, help rural households better manage risks, and promote agricultural production and rural livelihoods. Capacities of governments and national stakeholders are strengthened through tools for policy analysis to assess the impact of social protection schemes. A review of access to food, agricultural productivity, and poverty at the household and community level, enables targeted action. Towards this end, FAO promotes social policy dialogue and establishes regional learning hubs through South-South Cooperation.

Aligning social protection and rural poverty reduction programmes in Ghana

FAO has analysed social protection programmes in a district in Northern Ghana, as part of an Integrated Rural Poverty Reduction Programme. As a result, the Government will extend its main social protection scheme (Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty, LEAP) to cover all beneficiary communities of the target district and to embed it into broader agriculture and rural development programmes for the region.

Building on FAO’s policy analysis and support, the Government recognizes that: “LEAP has had a positive impact on local economic growth. Every Ghanaian Cedi (GH) transferred to a beneficiary has the potential of increasing the local economy by GH 2.50. It has enabled the poorest families to better meet their basic needs, prioritize their health, enroll their children in school, improve school attendance, increase savings and work to pull themselves out of poverty.” (President of Ghana, 28 April 2014).
EXPECTED RESULTS

• Expand and improve the effectiveness of social protection systems in full alignment with food and nutrition and sustainable agriculture and rural development policies.

KEY PARTNERS

FAO is engaging with multiple partners at global, regional and national level. With the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), FAO is promoting the From Protection to Production (PtoP) approach in policy support to countries and extending social protection floors to rural areas. Partnerships with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on a range of safety nets have been developed, including smallholder local purchase (P4P), larger local purchase in Africa (PAA) and index-linked insurance schemes. South-South Cooperation is being facilitated in all of these areas. FAO is a member of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board.

WHY INVEST

Extending social protection schemes to rural areas and aligning these with supportive agriculture and food policies is a proven and cost-effective way of promoting food security and nutrition, reducing rural poverty and mitigating vulnerability to environmental shocks. FAO’s programme on Social Protection for Food Security and Rural Poverty Reduction builds on its expertise and comparative advantage in scaling up such efforts and sharing experiences.

Links to FAO’s Regional Initiatives in: Africa, building resilient livelihoods; Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing family farming and rural territorial development; support to a hunger-free Latin America; and Near East and North Africa, addressing small-scale agriculture; and building resilience to enhance food security.