The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) appoints the Project Team on Biofuels and Food Security

In October 2011, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) recommended appropriate parties and stakeholders to review biofuels policies – where applicable and if necessary – according to balanced science-based assessments of the opportunities and challenges they may present for food security so that biofuels can be produced where it is socially, economically and environmentally feasible to do so. In line with this, the CFS mandated the HLPE to conduct a science-based comparative literature analysis, taking into consideration the work produced by the FAO and Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), of the positive and negative effects of biofuels on food security to be presented to the CFS; Final findings are to feed the CFS in view of its plenary session of October 2013.

As per the HLPE procedures, the preparation of the report will be undertaken by an HLPE Project Team, under the responsibility of a Team Leader and under the oversight of the HLPE Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee of the HLPE is pleased to announce that it has appointed the following Project Team for its study on Biofuels and Food Security:

John Wilkinson (Brazil/UK, Team Leader)
Suraya Afiff (Indonesia)
Miguel Carriquiry (Uruguay)
Charles Jumbe (Malawi)
Timothy Searchinger (USA)

Next steps

Based on the results of the electronic consultation on the proposed scope of the study, and under the HLPE Steering Committee oversight and guidance, the Project Team will elaborate a first version (V0) of the report, expected for December 2012, which will be submitted to further expert input and feedback through an open electronic consultation. According to the provisions of the Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE, prior to their publication, the draft reports shall undergo external scientific peer review and the final versions shall be approved by the HLPE Steering Committee.

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the HLPE, the HLPE Secretariat
John Wilkinson (Project Team Leader)

John Wilkinson is Associate Professor and currently Director of the Social Science Graduate Center, “Development, Agriculture and Society” (CPDA), at the Federal Rural University, Rio de Janeiro. He was a fellow at the European Commission and consultant to the OECD Development Center on agrifood innovation (1984-6). He was a visiting researcher at INRA, Paris, and a member of the research network “Agrifood Restructuring in Europe”, funded by the EC (1989-91). In Latin America and Brazil, he has carried out studies on a range of agrifood issues for the CEPAL, FAO, INTAL/BID, PROCISUR, BNDES, various Ministries in Brazil, OXFAM, ACTIONAID and other NGOs. He has published widely in academic journals in Brazil, the US and Europe and was co-author of From Farming to Biotechnology (1987, Blackwell) and Fair Trade: the Challenges of Transforming Globalization (2007, Routledge). Recently, his work, research and publications, have focused on the emergence of new markets from an economic sociology perspective, and in this context on biofuels and new investments in agriculture.

Suraya Afiff

Suraya Afiff is a lecturer at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Indonesia. She also serves as the head of the Center for Anthropological Studies at the same university. She is currently one of the researchers of JARAK, a research project that aims to explore the process of commoditization of Jatropha curcas in Indonesia. This project is under the umbrella of Agriculture Beyond Food program, a collaborative project between the Ministry of Research and Technology in Indonesia, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), and The Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Her interests include the issues of forest land tenure, land conflicts between smallholders and private large scale agriculture developments, and the promotion of REDD plus (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in the Indonesian context. She received her Ph.D. in Environmental Science, Policy and Management from the University of California at Berkeley in 2004.

Miguel Carriquiry

Miguel Carriquiry is an Associate Scientist at Iowa State University’s Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD). He received his B.S. in agricultural engineering from the University of the Republic in Uruguay, and his PhD in Agricultural Economics from Iowa State University. He also worked as a postdoctoral researcher in the areas of value added agriculture (at CARD) and in climate risk management in agriculture (at Columbia University). Carriquiry has worked extensively in the areas of agricultural markets and the impacts of biofuels in this sector. His current research also includes the maintenance and development of the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute’s (FAPRI) global agricultural modelling system, which has a long tradition of use in agricultural, biofuel and energy policy analysis. He has authored or co-authored over 50 journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, poster papers and other reports.
Charles Jumbe


Timothy Searchinger

Tim Searchinger is an Associate Research Scholar at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School (USA) whose work focuses on the intersection of food security, land use, and agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. He is also a Senior Fellow of the World Resources Institute and a regular summer fellow at Oxford University’s Smith School for Enterprise and the Environment. Searchinger is best known for papers regarding the land use, greenhouse gas and food security implications of bioenergy. His work also focuses on strategies for boosting food consumption while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. He is presently serving as technical director of a two-year study by WRI, in collaboration with major international institutions, on strategies for meeting food needs while reducing agricultural emissions by 2050. Searchinger holds a J.D. from Yale Law School, and worked for twenty years in government and with the Environmental Defense Fund on issues related to agricultural policies, water and wetlands. His work now combines ecology, agronomy and economics.
The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is the central international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition, where policies can be designed, interventions can be coordinated, options can be shared and decisions at different levels can be prepared.

The new CFS is inclusive. In addition to member countries, the Committee includes a wider range of organizations working on food security and nutrition, from UN agencies like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and other UN bodies. It also includes civil society and non-governmental organizations, particularly organisations representing smallholder family farmers, fisherfolk, herders, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers and indigenous people.

The High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created in October 2009 as an essential element of the reform of CFS, and as the scientific and knowledge-based pillar of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

The HLPE aims to help CFS to better understand the diversity of issues and rationales when dealing with food and nutrition insecurity. To do so, it will thrive to clarify contradictory information and knowledge, elicit the backgrounds and rationales of controversies, and identify emerging issues. This will among others build upon the diversity of disciplines, backgrounds and regional origins of the Steering Committee members and of Project Teams.

The HLPE is not mandated to conduct new research. The HLPE will draw its studies based on existing research and knowledge already conducted by various expertise-providing institutions (universities, research institutes, international organizations etc), and adding value by global, multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary analysis.

HLPE recommendations and studies will combine scientific knowledge with experiences from the ground, in a same rigorous process. The HLPE will translate the richness and variety of forms of expert knowledge from many actors (knowledge of local implementation, knowledge based on global research and knowledge of “best practice”) that draw on both local and global sources, into policy-related forms of knowledge.

Key functions of the HLPE, as stated in the CFS reform document

As directed by the CFS Plenary and Bureau, the HLPE will:
1. Assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes.
2. Provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies.
3. Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas.

The HLPE is directly linked to the foremost international policy platform for food security and nutrition, the CFS. This ensures the legitimacy and relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political agenda at international level.

The HLPE produces its recommendations and advice independently from governmental positions, in order to enrich discussions and debates at CFS. Thus, the internal process and its results guarantee the independence of the HLPE.

The HLPE has a two-tier structure:
- A Steering Committee composed of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields.
- Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the StC to analyze/report on specific issues.

More information about the HLPE can be found on its website: www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe