·         **Were the first ten years of implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines a success? Or were you disappointed? Is the glass half full or have empty?** I’d say it is half empty. Not really disappointed. Perhaps I never expected much of them for the reasons expressed in my previous posting on FSN about voluntary guidelines.

·         **Looking at the last ten years, what are success stories of the progressive realization of the right to food?** There are some, but how much are they related to the VRtFG beyond pronunciations? **And what are the biggest challenges?**  I have elaborated below based on the synthesis report you posted.

·         **How can the Right to Food Guidelines be used better to accelerate the realization of the right to food?** Moving towards making some of its suggestions binding by involving social movements much more proactively. **What would be the role of the Committee on World Food Security?** It could champion this idea.

·         **We are often criticized for doing advocacy only (**probably rightly so?)**: Where is the evidence that a human rights based approach leads to better outcomes?** If applied as a bottom-up empowering approach, I contend it can; we need the evidence. True. **What’s your answer to this challenging question?** I have elaborated below based on the synthesis report you posted.

[I proceed sequentially in what is aid in the synthesis report posted]

* The VRtFG refer to the general conditions needed as the “enabling environment” for food security and nutrition. I agree, but here I understand this as the right conditions to unleash action. An enabling environment can only come from the bottom up.
* The Right to Food Guidelines put emphasis on ensuring that the conditions are right for successful work on food security to emerge. In 10 years, haven’t we stayed at the level of putting emphasis, but barely ensuring? It just cannot be done top-down…
* Effective accountability systems with systematic progress monitoring and impact evaluation, as well as access to legal, quasi-judicial and administrative grievance mechanisms are needed. Absolutely, but hardly fond in place anywhere. The political will of signatory states is just not there beyond lip service.
* The Right to Food entails respecting past commitment, current obligations and further action for the future. Yes, but…
* 13.Over the past two decades, leaders and decision‐makers have made pledges to reduce hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. We are not short of pledges --even by dictators. A trigger for a renewed focus on the hunger topic was the 2008 world food crisis that led to the launching of a number of international governance and financing initiatives relating to food security. And where are we now? Better on the chronic front? Are we not rather talking about the long-term? The UN System High Level Task Force ﴾HLTF﴿ on the Global Food Security Crises brought together the main global actors and agreed on a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA﴿ that combines immediate and long-term responses to this crisis. In crises the international community responds --eventually. The CFA’s good things notwithstanding, I fail to see the longer term responses mentioned sticking sustainably.
* The particular importance of the right to food in the global food security architecture was highlighted by the UN Secretary-General’s appeal to add the right to food as a third track to the well-known twin-track approach to hunger reduction --as a basis for analysis, action and accountability (Ban Ki-Moon, 2009﴿. Yes, but we are now in 2014; analysis: not bad (we are good at chronicling achievements and non-achievements); action: ‘worser’; accountability: ??
* 14.An international enabling environment for national food security was
* established. Was it? The reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS﴿ became an inclusive multi-stakeholder platform with a strategic focus on the right to food. Yes, and this is to be celebrated (more than the 10th anniversary, I’d say). This was translated into instruments that were adopted through consultative processes. How well have these instruments worked?
* In 2012, the CFS adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT﴿, which aim to improve the governance of tenure towards achieving food security for all ﴾with an emphasis on vulnerable and marginalized people﴿, and to support the progressive realization of the right to food. I celebrate, but again, I am weary about them being voluntary and thus mostly normative. What will say in their 10th anniversary?
* In 2013, the CFS adopted the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition in order to improve coordination and guide synchronized implementation of the RtFG. I confess I am not too versed in them and their impact.
* CFS members are currently conducting negotiations on principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems that support the progressive realization of the right to food. Very welcome. Hopefully not voluntary…
* 15.The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development ﴾Rio+20﴿ further reaffirmed the commitment of states to realizing the right of all persons to adequate food and to be free from hunger, as well as the commitment to enhancing FSN, in accordance with the Rome Principles for Sustainable Food Security (UN, 2012﴿. Welcome, but reaffirmation in UN parlance means what in practice? The attention to the right to food in the Conference was boosted by the UN Secretary-General’s launch of the Zero Hunger Challenge with the aim of ensuring that every man, woman and child enjoy their right to adequate food. Welcome, but only an aim? Not a strong, unequivocal demand? Kissinger already pledged this in 1992.
* The focus areas identified by the Open Working Group established by the Conference to prepare a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs﴿ include human rights together with FSN ﴾OWG, 2014﴿. Goals are easier to set than processes towards the progressive realization of HR; we have criticized this from the MDGs already. Moreover, these are goals set top-down by experts; do we never learn? Human rights and the principle of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and the rule of law are also an integral part of the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda (UN System Task Team, 2012). Are not ‘also’ an integral part. We are talking about the UN. The UN has mandate for this!
* FAO, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development have contributed to this process, jointly proposing five targets and 22 indicators that are closely related to the right to food, especially the targets of
* ending malnutrition and ensuring that all people have access to adequate food (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2014). Targets are targets! Targets are easier to set than timed processes towards the progressive realization of HR with annual benchmarks to be monitored by public interest civil society acting as watchdogs.
* 16.The foundation of any food security and nutrition activity is a good understanding of the underlying and root causes why people are not able to realize their right to food. The overall economy, as well as the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, social and other sectors, can contribute in multiple ways to food security and nutrition. Can or does? The Right to Food Guidelines thus recommend a “careful assessment of existing national legislation, policy and administrative measures, current programmes, systematic identification of existing constraints and availability of existing resources” (Guideline 3.2﴿. …and this is where it stops short: recommend to who? Hasn’t it mostly fallen on deaf ears? I’d say it is claim holders who have to assess and then, demand.
* 17. An essential step of such an assessment is to undertake disaggregated analysis
* to identify structural and temporal causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and thus enable programme designers to select the most targeted approach to address those causes. How short have we fallen on this so far? Even if we had disaggregated data, would program designers act if not under pressure from affected claim holders? These ‘designers’ are there, because they subscribe to the ideology of the state which is more often than not HR-impermeable.
* The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC﴿ is a good example of a joint analysis of the food security situation in a country by all actors. The tool incorporates all pieces of evidence available at the country level, including factors that relate to how food security is governed, for instance the effectiveness of national institutions. I confess I am not too versed in this and its impact.
* Ensuring the legal protection of the right to food is of crucial importance in any country. There are a number of possible pathways for achieving this, namely constitutional protection, framework laws and sectoral legislation. Yes, but pathways almost not traveled…or if traveled, not implemented.
* The constitution, as the fundamental or supreme law of the land, affords the strongest legal protection of a human right and also represents a strong statement that a state is committed to the realization of the right to food for its citizens. How man examples do we have of holding the many constitutions that mention the RTF justiciable? More and more constitutions add HR wording to keep up with the Johnses. Furthermore, are quasi-judicial mechanisms at national, regional and international levels increasingly holding states accountable?
* At least 28 states explicitly protect the right to food in their constitution, and around 40 countries could be said to implicitly recognize the right to food ﴾e.g. within a broader provision, such as protection of an adequate standard of living﴿. ….and?(A number of countries have adopted new constitutions or amended their constitutions in the decade since the adoption of the RtFG: Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Maldives and Niger. In addition, many countries have constitutional provisions giving legal effect to human rights treaties that they have ratified, on a par with constitutional protection. ….and?
* However, not all new constitutions since 2004 have included the right to food, and there are many countries where the constitutional protection of this fundamental human right is much more indirect. There is thus still much work to be done to promote constitutional improvements. Indeed; with or without existing constitutional mandates.
* It is questionable whether Rio+20 and the post 2015 development agenda have been influenced by the Voluntary Guidelines. It is likely that the 22 indicators now proposed by FAO for post 2015would have been proposed even without the RtFG. So, do we recognize some advances and maybe some impacts resulting from the Guidelines? As said, a lot of normative, top-down good ideas are embedded in it --but have largely remained normative (not that this is not better than nothing).
* The synthesis rightly says on para 24 that policy decisions need to be followed by concrete implementation actions, and backed up by resource allocation with appropriate incentives for targeted investments.
* But it also says that policy coherence is a major challenge. Not really! The major challenge is that the process to achieve food sovereignty is not being geared bottom up. Issues of coherence will come a far second.
* Evidence shows that positive changes in national food insecurity and malnutrition levels have been brought about by actions which recall the content and guidance provided by the RtFG and human rights principles. Can we really say this? Evidence?
* Large foreign investments have been made in agriculture that sometimes fail to have positive effects. How sometimes? A lot sometimes?
* The VGGT contain provisions addressed to both governments and investors on how to ensure respect for legitimate tenure rights and the right to food in this context. Yes, but on a voluntary basis… And land grabbing is not called by its name here. Why?
* 29. A dialogue on policies, participation and coordination of stakeholders’ efforts among all actors is needed; This is my main point: it is not happening. Why use the terrible, non-HR compatible word stakeholders?? [Actually, a RTF synthesis document that continues to talk about actors and stakeholders and avoids rights holders and duty bearers is unconscionable to me. (It is not until para 52 on page 16 (of 18) that this is mentioned!)].
* Box 5. Holistic approaches are needed to realize the right to food. Yes, you mention Brasil. But there, you cannot discount there was/is a political intention --absent elsewhere.
* 32.Experience shows that institutions with strong leadership (best if led by a head of state), a clear mandate on the right to food, well-trained personnel, adequate resource endowment and a high degree of participation of non-government actors have the best chance to guide effective implementation of a food security and nutrition strategy at the country level. As per 29. above, I would have preferred you start the sentence with the high degree of participation and then the rest. (and, please, not non-governmental actors, but rather public interest civil society!).
* Authorities need to constantly identify shortcomings and adopt the necessary corrective measures. Not the authorities, but public interest civil society acting as watchdogs of the progressive realization of the RTF.
* The aid effectiveness agenda is in line with the rights-based aid effectiveness requirement of the RtFG. Is It really…? I’d say not beyond pronouncements.
* A review of donor approaches and experiences over the past decade shows that most bilateral and multilateral donors have adopted policies that integrate human rights. ?? This, to me, is a blunt overstatement. I cannot see it.
* The Food Aid Convention was renegotiated and renamed the Food Assistance Convention, and it specifically refers to the RtFG. I confess I am not versed in this, but this would prove what? Ultimate impact? Voluntary Guidelines applied?
* The enjoyment of the right to food remains elusive. You say it, not me. Role of the RtFG?
* A social protection scheme that protects the poor and vulnerable and enables them to at least have sufficient food does not exist. …An equitable access to resources and assets, especially land, to protect the livelihood of millions does not exist. Again, we agree.
* The global movement Scaling-up Nutrition (SUN﴿ is founded on the principle that all people have a right to food. We all know this is not true beyond lip service. Start with SUN being riddled with conflict of interest pending issues. SUN does not really build things from the bottom up. (I have written extensively about this and will not repeat here).
* There is room for incorporating and enhancing grievance mechanisms for programme participants to access remedies. It is not that there is room, please. There is an obligation!
* More and more countries are moving the right to food into the centre of their food security and nutrition policies and programmes, reforming their institutional framework according to human rights principles, and strengthening legal recognition and protection of the right to food in their legislation. This, to me, is an overstatement. I cannot see it. I’ll be glad to be proven wrong.
* Governments, but also a growing coalition of non-governmental organizations, media, farmers’ associations, civil society groups, academia, development partners, etc. subscribe to the idea that a holistic, multi-stakeholder and multisectoral approach is required in order to progressively realize the right to food. Maybe, but certainly not to the same degree! Furthermore, do not overlook that public interest civil society objects to a multi-stakeholder approach that includes conflicted private sector actors.
* It is not only to remind governments and political communities of their duty to guarantee the progressive realization of the right to food, but to enable citizens to actively claim or support that right. Yes, but (again) it is not about reminding, please; it is about demanding.
* An additional goal of a food security and nutrition policy is thus to empower citizens to become economic as well as political agents. It is not an additional goal! The use of inaccurate, non HR compatible language in this Synthesis report is pervasive.
* The activity of building public support for recognition of the right to food is itself a form of social mobilization. No, it is not. Social mobilization is a political act and the RtFG do not call for this. It is exactly what is missing and do I need to say that this will never appear in voluntary guidelines?
* The Right to Food Guidelines suggest the actions to be taken and the process to
* be followed. Maybe, but… All the above makes me wonder. Suggesting has clearly fallen short. And finally,
* Helping those whose right to food isn’t met should be our one and only yardstick. Yes, but this gets lost in the Synthesis report. Great closing statement, but ‘helping’ needs to be qualified.

In summary, I see all not being so rosy as the Synthesis paper purports. There are also serious language use problems as I point out. Are we seeing a broad buy-in? Maybe not broad and little beyond pronouncements I’d say.