**Promoting Family Farming: Realising the Right to Food**

A Ercelan and Muhammad Ali Shah

|  |
| --- |
| **Right to Food - UN***The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.**The right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.**The fundamental right is to freedom from hunger and malnutrition.**Access to land and security of tenure are essential for the enjoyment of the right to food. ..States and the international community could better respect, protect and fulfil the right to food by giving increased recognition to land as a human right. ..while security of tenure is indeed crucial, individual titling and the creation of a market for land rights may not be the most appropriate means to achieve it. Instead, the strengthening of customary land tenure systems and the reinforcement of tenancy laws could significantly improve the protection of land users. ..lessons learned from decades of agrarian reform [are] the importance of land redistribution for the realization of the right to food. .development models that do not lead to evictions, disruptive shifts in land rights and increased land concentration should be prioritized.* |

After several years of lobbying by the World Rural Forum, Via Campesina and their allies, the UN has declared 2014 as the Year of Family Farming. It is supposed to be a celebration of small farmers (including livestock husbandry, fishers and foresters) in contributing to decent life and livelihood for themselves and for urban workers. For some, this is merely instrumental to economic growth.

For us, however, the priority to family farming reflects *values* and therefore implies specific actions as ethical conduct. We believe in the rights of nature: to be used for social need but not human greed. Hence our approach to sustainable agriculture is actually quite simple: realizing equity today cannot override the rights of future generations. In other words, ecological sustainability is integral to justice.

We hold large, commercial agriculture and their allies in national and global elites as responsible for mass hunger. And we reject the possibility of corporate being ‘incentivised’ to realize and secure the universal right to food (or water for that matter).

This note reviews UN-FAO documents as well as proceedings of two intercontinental events in which the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum participated. Our intention is to promote activism rooted in a vision of development as ecological integrity and equitable livelihoods – as two blades of a scissor, if you will.

While it may seem irrelevant, the good health of ecosystems – land, water, forests -- is in fact critical to fisherfolk livelihoods in both marine and riverine fisheries. Subsistence and small fisherfolk are increasingly endangered, not only by large commercial and industrial fishing but also by degradation and destruction of fisheries through other profit-based commerce and industry, including large farms.

|  |
| --- |
| **Voluntary Guidelines - FAO***The Voluntary Guidelines represent the first attempt by governments to interpret an economic, social and cultural right and to recommend actions to be undertaken for its realization. The objective of the Voluntary Guidelines is to provide practical guidance to States in their implementation of the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. ..cover the full range of actions in order to build an enabling environment for people to feed themselves in dignity and to establish appropriate safety nets for those who are unable to do so. They can be used to strengthen and improve current development frameworks, particularly with regard to social and human dimensions, putting the entitlements of people more firmly at the centre of development.*Right to Adequate Food*States should strive to ensure responsible governance of tenure because land, fisheries and forests are central for the realization of human rights, food security, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, and social and economic growth. .. should ensure that all actions regarding tenure and its governance are consistent with their existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. All parties should recognize that no tenure right, including private ownership, is absolute. All tenure rights are limited by the rights of others and by the measures taken by States necessary for public purposes. Such measures should be determined by law, solely for the purpose of promoting general welfare including environmental protection and consistent with States’ human rights obligations. Tenure rights are also balanced by duties. All should respect the long-term protection and sustainable use of land, fisheries and forests.* Governance of Tenure*All parties should recognize and respect the human rights principles, and their applicability to small-scale fisheries, as stipulated by international human rights standards: universality and inalienability; indivisibility; interdependence and interrelatedness; non-discrimination and equality; participation and inclusion; accountability and the rule of law. ..should also recognize the interdependence of democracy, economic development and human rights. Equitable development is fundamental and gender equality and respect for all should be promoted. States should promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to empower individuals and civil society in small-scale fisheries to make demands on their governments, devise policies that address their specific needs and ensure the accountability and transparency of governments and state decision-making processes in implementing such policies. ..should respect and protect the civil and political rights of defenders of human rights. Non-state actors including business enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights. ..should regulate the scope of activities in relation to small-scale fisheries of non-state actors to ensure their compliance with international human rights standards. Human rights are not limited to national jurisdictions and states should observe the extraterritorial dimension of their human rights obligations.* Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries |

Around the globe there is now (even if belated) recognition of the necessary role of family farming in sustainable development defined to include the *right to food* (and water) through availability, accessibility, stability and utilisation. A special contribution of family farming is then food security. This is particularly noteworthy in a world of mass hunger and malnutrition burdening a billion children, women, men and the aged unnecessarily and unacceptably with global capacity to feed 12 billion (as reminded by Hilal Elver, the new UNHCR Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food).

All advocates of family farming stress the contribution of small farms to producing food and providing employment, and maybe even to ecological integrity. Some illustrations from Pakistan are given in the graphs below. Small farms in Pakistan taken together account for most of the acreage devoted to wheat – well in excess of their share in farm acreage. The reason being that small farms allocate in their cropped area a larger share to food crops, as illustrated by data for Sindh. Published data do not crosstabulate farm size by tenure; but it makes sense to observe that among small farms it is the freer owners who devote more to food crops than do tenants commanded by landlords. Hence domestic food production would increase significantly through mimicking small farmers. The favourable implication for land reforms is obvious.

Source: Agriculture Census 2010

Compared to large farms the smaller family farms are likely to strive for and attain larger yields per acre in food crops (through e.g. less waste and more labour for weeding). Then small farms would have an even larger share in total production than that implied by acreage only. When food security accords, as it should, a value to food crops higher than market valuation then contribution of family farms to GDP increases further.

Additional characteristics can also favour small farms. Being provided less than half the land, farms upto 12.5 acres account for well over 80 percent of those hiring casual labour. It may well be a reflection of credit constraints, but we do note that users of manure – solely and in combination with chemical fertilizer – is substantially more prevalent amongst such small farms as compared to larger farms. Sadly, the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides is no less widespread among small farms. Similarly, small farms place as much stress on soils, through high cropping intensity, as do large farms; no doubt a reflection of poverty.

In arguing for policy priority to family farming it is often held that compared to large commercial farms, small family farms are also ahead in terms of ecology: at least less damaging and possibly even contributing to ecological restoration. Unable to match bribes and political power of large farmers, small farms are generally disadvantaged in irrigation water. Hence it is most likely that small farms conserve water, and put less stress on drainage systems in addition to delaying if not denying irreversible loss of land to water logging and salinity. The differences in cropping pattern are an indicator – cash crops such as sugar cane are water guzzlers compared to food crops such as wheat.

**Agrarian Reforms**

Earlier this year, an intercontinental meeting (in Abu Dhabi, organized by the World Rural Forum) discussed the promotion of family farming, including attraction of young people back towards farming. On some points, there was a clear consensus of analysis and hence of demands for action -- including expanded public funding for small farms to become more productive through more of nature friendly *agro-ecology* and less of chemical and water splurging ‘modern’ agriculture. Less important in Africa than in Asia was the considered need for redistributing land to create additional small farms. All were of course opposed to land and water grabbing by multinationals, specially for monoculture of fuel crops on land traditionally used for feeding families on subsistence and small farms.

|  |
| --- |
| **Declaration of Farming Organisations - WRF***Demand 1. Each nation should have the right to develop its own food production as the basis for Food Security on the way to achieving Food Sovereignty, taking into account climate change as one of the serious threats to Family Farming.**Demand 2. Governments must assume as an urgent priority the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests which they themselves approved within the Committee on Food Security -CFS-.**Demand 3: In order to promote Family Farming, nations the majority of whose population is active in agriculture must proceed with the transparent and adequate allocation of financial resources to national agriculture budgets. The same criteria should apply to development aid and public investments on the basis of the meaningful participation of family farmers' organisations as well as other Civil Society entities.**Demand 4: Institute the equality of rights between men and women family farmers. Women who live and work in rural areas are frequently discriminated against in terms of equitable access to productive resources such as land, water,credit and extension services.*Abu Dhabi, 2014 |

Reforms must embrace fisheries. This year the FAO has finalized a visionary document to promote small-scale fisheries. Its framework of principles is very useful in framing provincial and federal (for the EEZ) Fisheries Policy for time-bound actions by government. However, such a Policy would not be able to fulfill its potential contribution to equity and ecology until such time as other policies are contradictory. The export policy to incentivize seafood exports will simply add to the already severe problem of overfishing and wasted by-catch. Energy and industrial policies that threaten the health of water systems will put unbearable stress on fisheries – most dangerously by coal mining and power generation, but also by dams and barrages. Even flow-of-river hydropower interferes with the natural morphology of rivers.

**Research Issues**

This summer witnessed a dialogue between (scores of) international researchers and activists on issues of family farming (hosted in France) by several international organizations, as well as by the French Government in active endorsement of family farming. Given the range of interests, professions and political commitments – from the radical Via Campesina to technocratic CGIAR -- it was inevitable that agreement was difficult, and hence postponed, on crucial issues such as redistribution of social (private and public) resources for promoting equity and ecological sustainability. Or on what to do with international trade as the route to food security in the face of food insecurity arising from global speculation on food crops, and the contradiction inherent in virtual water exports -- e.g. through sugar and textiles -- that led to lesser production of cereals and vegetables, specially perverse when deficit production simultaneously necessitated imports. Nevertheless, there appeared an underlying agreement that reducing food vulnerability includes maximizing control of natural resources by communities of small farmers rather than of corporate markets and political elites. Inevitably issues of small crop farmers dominated discussion to the detriment of special concerns of fisherfolk and other agriculturalists.

|  |
| --- |
| **Discussion Agenda***There are over 500 million family farms spread across the world, on all continents. Family farmers are the main producers of foodstuffs in many regions and vitally contribute to the variety and quality of diets.Paradoxically, many family farmers are also food and nutrition insecure.**Family farming in the territories: What are the present developments on land tenure, and what are the options on land tenure management? Which trade‐offs, which complementarities and synergies/tensions and conflicts do exist between the various production systems? What are the linkages and articulations with the other uses of space, economic or residential or landscaping ones? What contribution offers family farming to organize space scaling‐up from the farm to watershed, landscape or industrial agro‐food basin?**2. Family farming facing the challenges of agro‐ecological intensification: in a context of an increasing scarcity of natural resources and facing the energetic challenge, which technologies for producing, protecting, processing agricultural food are offered to family farming? Which systems for training and accompanying family farmers? What types of credit to stimulate the agro‐ecological transition of family farmers? What kind of productions specialized or associated considering crops, livestock, aquaculture to be developed in order to involve family farming as contributors to global food security?**3. In‐house issues within family farming: which organization forms for agricultural activities? Family solidarity and public solidarity, family farming functions as a safety net: how to highlight this function? Which role for women, what is the future of the youth in the organization of family farms? What are the cross‐generation transmissions? Which new family forms emerge from increasing mobility of people?**4. Family farming facing the challenges of urbanization and employment: what new markets do the cities represent for agriculture tomorrow? Which relationship between family farming and these new markets? What will be the jobs in agriculture and which part of pluri‐activity? Which role for family farming in the rural‐urban continuum? Which models of economic development between increasing agriculture wealth and alternatives to agriculture?**5. Family farming facing the challenges of climate change: what space and which roles for a smart agriculture facing the climate issues? How to integrate the landscape scale in the various individual strategies? How resilience approaches can mobilize positive transformational change in places where these global issues ‘land on the ground’ and at a pace that can keep up with a rapidly changing world?**6. Contribution of family farming to the food systems: towards what sustainable and accountable food systems? What answers to the stakes in food and nutritional security at the local and global levels? How to ensure food and nutritional safety of the urban populations? Which articulation between agricultural and social policies?**7. Family farming as one of the players in the future of agriculture: what objects and methods to report on family farming? What can be the conditions of a co‐existence between various forms of farming (smallholders, commercial farms, enterprises, big companies ...) on the same territories or within the same value chains? Is the 'farming system' approach more accurate to take into account interactions and interdependences both within farming units and in their connections with their economic, social and natural environment?*International Encounters in Family Farming & Research |

For some odd reason there was virtually no open discussion around a theme reiterated by the Vice Chair of HLPE (Mariam Rahmanian): that we must acknowledge the opposition of specific national and global institutions to promoting family farming. In the Asian context, we believe, economic interests of the armed forces need more careful evaluation for obstructing not just equity but also generating ecological disasters. We accept the evaluation of many that the North is no different from the South in this regard except for a more sophisticated camouflage of depredation as public interest.

The Conference was organized around a number of workshops introduced by orientation papers. In the absence of a weblink, interested readers may contact the authors or the World Rural Forum for the set of papers. Summaries of workshop discussions are awaited.

**Food Security Policy in Pakistan**

The only policy-for-action document we have come across, in the contemporary situation of mass deprivation in Pakistan, is a draft prepared by the Federal Government. To summarise our previous review: the provinces need to put Islamabad to shame for a shabby document that betrays a lack of comprehension of the right to food; consequent obligations of the state; and an analysis of present failure in realizing this right. As a result, we are exporting sugar and rice, but importing wheat and potatoes. Land reform is naturally not present in the ‘vision’ of the federation.

Growth remains the mantra of the state and its donors. For brevity, we invite the reader to ask why we have mass hunger despite years of ‘high’ growth, ‘large’ foreign exchange reserves, etc. Sadly, our advisors from FAO have the same obsessions – which have led the UN to understate the level of hunger and overstate the contribution of growth to reduction in hunger.

|  |
| --- |
| **State of Food Insecurity – Critique of FAO**1. *SOFI’S PORTRAYAL OF “GLOBAL PROGRESS” FAILS TO CONVEY HOW CONCENTRATED AND UNEVEN THE GAINS HAVE BEEN. IT COULD ALSO LEAD READERS TO CONCLUDE THAT A RETURN TO TRENDS PRIOR TO THE 2007 RECESSION WOULD LARGELY MEET HUNGER-REDUCTION GOALS.*
2. *THE FAO BASES ITS ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF HUNGRY PEOPLE—NOW 868 MILLION— ON A CALORIE THRESHOLD BELOW THE MINIMUM REQUIRED FOR A “SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE” AND LASTING MORE THAN A YEAR. IT THUS SEEMS SURE TO GRAVELY UNDERESTIMATE HUNGER AS COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD.*
3. *THE 2012 HUNGER ESTIMATE, RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC AS A TOTAL, DOES NOT CAPTURE THE IMPACT OF HIGHER FOOD PRICES OR THE GLOBAL RECESSION.*
4. *THE REPORT’S EMPHASIS ON “GROWTH” IS NOT SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE PRESENTED, AND IT FAILS TO ALERT READERS THAT COUNTRIES’ EQUITY-ORIENTED PUBLIC POLICIES HAVE BEEN AT LEAST AS EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING HUNGER.*

Small Planet Institute: Framing Hunger |

To add insult to injury, the state has become obsessed with expanding the generation of electricity – unwisely putting the cart before the horse in the face of a transmission and distribution system incapable of bearing even the existing capacity. Ecologically, the obsession with coal and nuclear power will be a disaster for livelihoods dependent upon natural water flows across the country. Hence the energy-water nexus will result in more rather than less *food insecurity* – directly as well as indirectly through sickness and suffering. A recent illustration is appropriation of many acres of productive farm land in Sahiwal for coal generation to benefit local industry.

A Social Protection Floor is on the agenda of many international institutions. As Francine Mestrum (of Social Justice) reminded us in a PILER Conference, we must go beyond the levels suggested, by e.g. ILO, to also engage with extreme and rising inequality that robs people of dignity in social interactions. She also reminds us now on the manipulation of poverty data by international agencies, obviously to feed the illusion of economic growth as *the* reason for meeting MDGs. This is also an occasion to remind ourselves of how policy makers and their financiers fail to recognize non-market investments and ecological conservation by family farmers – not unlike the mostly male statisticians that define national product to exclude the home-based contribution of care workers who, not coincidentally, are mostly females.

We feel that significant progress can be made cost-effectively through secure and decent livelihoods based on autonomous, egalitarian control over natural resources by communities. This would require grasping power from markets and the State, which requires vibrant, broad-based social movements.

In a recent edition, the Human Development Report for South Asia focuses upon water. Representing influential interests in Pakistan, the Report deserves a careful review. At this point we must express our serious concern at its recommendation for more mega dams -- surprising in view of the report’s documentation of a range of significantly adverse impacts upon ecology and equity: e.g. upon the Indus delta.

**Weblinks**

*Coal*

facebook.com/groups/403445303124747/

priceofoil.org/coal-subsidies-toolkit/

psr.org/assets/pdfs/coals-assault-executive.pdf

*Fisheries*

[fao.org/3/a-i3720e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e.pdf)

[fao.org/3/a-i3844e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3844e.pdf)

fao.org/docrep/016/ap553e/ap553e.pdf

srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/otherdocuments/20121030\_fish\_execsummary.pdf

*Hydraulic Bureaucracy*

dx.doi.org/10.1080/1045575052000335339

jstor.org/discover/10.2307/4411933?uid=3738832&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21103991719421

sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=supply-sidehydrorohan.pdf&site=253

water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol2/v2issue3/65-a2-3-3/file

*Food Security Policy*

asiapacific.anu.edu.au/blogs/southasiamasala/2014/07/05/life-for-all-nourished-now-forever/

fao.org/publications/sofi/2013/en/

fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/

fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF\_guidelines/TC/2014/2e.pdf

fao.org/3/a-i2953e.pdf

fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications/RtFJournal\_2013\_final\_web\_01.pdf

<http://mhhdc.org/wp-content/themes/mhdc/reports/HDSA-2013.pdf>

http://mhhdc.org/wp-content/themes/mhdc/reports/HDSA%202010-2011.pdf

[smallplanet.org/sites/smallplanet.org/files/Framing-Hunger-SOFI12-12-2.pdf](http://smallplanet.org/sites/smallplanet.org/files/Framing-Hunger-SOFI12-12-2.pdf)

srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20110308\_a-hrc-16-49\_agroecology\_en.pdf

steps-centre.org/publication/nexus-nirvana-nexus-nullity-dynamic-approach-security sustainability-water-energy-food nexus/

water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol5/v5issue2/165-a5-2-1/file

onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/dech.12083/

yale.edu/agrarianstudies/foodsovereignty/pprs/15\_AkramLodi\_2013-1.pdf

*Research Agenda*

agropolis.org/pdf/family-farming-thematic-file/foreword-family-farming-development-issues-reserach-opportunities.pdf

http://www.agropolis.org/pdf/news/2014-programme-international-encounters-family-farming-research.pdf

jstor.org/discover/10.2307/4411933?uid=3738832&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21103991719421

unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/resources/reports/world-social-science-report-2013/

*Right to Food*

daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/482/30/PDF/N1048230.pdf?OpenElement

elgaronline.com/view/journals/jhre/5-1/jhre.2014.01.01.xml

fao.org/docrep/009/y7937e/y7937e00.htm

ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf

rtfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rtfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch\_2013/Watch\_2013\_PDFs/Watch\_2013\_eng\_WEB\_final.pdf

*Social Protection*

globalsocialjustice.eu/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=405&Itemid=15

ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang--en/index.htm

*Year of Family Farming*

agropolis.org/news/2014-international-encounters-family-farming-research.php

[fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/](http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/)

grain.org/article/entries/4929

ruralforum.net/datos/files/noticias/448477890\_5.pdf

viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/sustainable-peasants-agriculture-mainmenu-42/1625-la-via-campesina-s-position-on-the-international-year-of-family-farming-2014

Muhammad Ali Shah chairs the World Forum of Fisher Peoples and Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum; A. Ercelan is a solidarity member of the Forum, with past service to PILER as senior Fellow. Gratefully acknowledged by authors is encouragement and support from the World Rural Forum, as well as from colleagues at PFF and PILER. The major debt is to fisherfolk communities participating in the drafting of a Fisheries Policy proposed to the Government of Sindh. Comments are welcomed at awarakhi@yahoo.com