Climate Change, Food Security and Nutrition

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Climate change directly affects food and nutrition security of millions of people, undermining current efforts to address undernutrition and hitting the poorest the hardest, especially women and children. It impacts people's livelihoods and lifestyles through different pathways. Farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and fisherfolk are already facing more challenges in producing and gathering food due to changing weather patterns, such as erratic rains. In the short term the impacts can be linked to extreme weather events which contribute to casualties, household food insecurity, disease and handicap, increased population dislocation and insecurity. In the longer term, climate change affects natural resources and therefore food availability and access, but also environmental health and access to health care. In the most affected areas these long-term impacts eventually can lead to transitory or permanent migration, which often leaves female-headed households behind.

Climate change is therefore seen as a significant “hunger-risk multiplier”. In fact, some forecasts anticipate 24 million additional malnourished children by 2050 - almost half of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Poor health and undernutrition in turn further undermine people's resilience to climatic shocks and their ability to adapt.

Climate change will exacerbate the crisis of undernutrition through three main causal pathways:

- impacts on household access to sufficient, safe and adequate food;
- impacts on care and feeding practices; and
- impacts on environmental health and access to health services.

Unless severe measures are taken, and countries reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and increase the removal of these gases from the atmosphere, it will be increasingly difficult and expensive to adapt to climate change.

Climate-smart agriculture is one of the solutions that have been proposed to fight climate change. It is an approach that aims at combining food security and development, adaptation to climate change as well as reducing and removing emissions, whenever possible. It will not be an easy task to transform agriculture and food systems so that they would be truly climate-smart, also taking into account nutrition considerations. So far limited attention has been given to the interface between climate change and nutrition and relevant policies, programmes and projects remain by and large disconnected. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework of Action adopted by the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition in November 2014 recognized “the
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The impacts of climate change and other environmental factors on food security and nutrition, in particular on the quantity, quality and diversity of food produced, must be addressed through appropriate action to tackle negative effects. Recommendations include establishing and strengthening institutions, policies, programmes and services to enhance the resilience of the food supply in crisis-prone areas, including areas affected by climate change.

The object of this consultation is to gain a better understanding of the impact of climate change on food security and nutrition as well as the impact of current dietary preferences and the related food systems. In addition, we invite you to identify possible measures to protect and/or improve nutrition and to adapt to climate change, while reducing and removing greenhouse gas emissions thus ensuring long-term food security.

We are well aware of the richness of relevant knowledge existing around the world and are looking forward to learn from your experience. We would therefore like to invite you to share your views on this thematic area. You may want to consider the following questions:

1) What are the main issues for policy-makers to consider when linking climate change on the one hand and food security and nutrition on the other, in particular when designing, formulating and implementing policies and programmes?

2) What are the key institutional and governance challenges to the delivery of cross-sectoral and comprehensive policies that protect and promote nutrition of the most vulnerable, and contribute to sustainable and resilient food systems?

3) In your experience, what are key best-practices and lessons-learned in fostering cross-sectoral linkages to protect and improve nutrition while preventing, adapting to climate change and reducing and removing greenhouse gas emissions in projects?

This consultation is part of the online learning event Climate Change, Food Security and Nutrition, organized jointly by the Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture Programme (MICCA) of FAO and the FSN Forum.

We look forward to a lively and interesting exchange!

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