

FSN Forum Workshop “FSN Forum policy dialogues: contributing to food security and nutrition policy processes at country and regional level”

Welcoming remarks by Rob Vos, Director ESA,

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The world has made significant progress in reducing hunger and improving food security and nutrition over the past decades. Policies have made a difference in many contexts, inter alia, by focused interventions to support improvements in productivity, access to markets and technologies of smallholder family farmers, as well as, measures improving access to food, including social protection. We know how to address food insecurity and hunger.

Yet, about 800 million people are still undernourished.

Among the reasons, why hunger and malnutrition persist are often:

- lack of political commitment in practice
- lack of a common understanding of the problems and their solutions
- lack of reliable data and information
- lack of coordination in the design and implementation of policies and programmes and consequent misalignment of investments

To break away from this vicious circle, FAO supports the creation of an enabling policy and institutional environment that provides the right conditions for intensified action to sustainably eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

The inclusion of the broadest set of stakeholders in these processes has been at the core of FAO's mandate and work for many years. FAO is widely recognized as the foremost open forum positioned to facilitate a true global debate on food security and nutrition.

Nonetheless, much of the potential for knowledge sharing remains untapped as many players are not in a position to participate in the main fora for such exchanges, such as international meetings and conferences and national policy dialogues. Especially, much of the knowledge generated by academia, civil society representatives, and practitioners goes to waste in the process of the design of policies and programmes for food security and adequate nutrition, when these players have no direct entry to such dialogues.

The FSN Forum plays an important role in helping to bridge these gaps by engaging experts and practitioners from all over the world in in policy dialogue.

The broad range of views gathered through the Forum's channels, such as online discussions and consultations, serves to inform and influence the global debate on food security and nutrition.

Today, eight years after its foundation in 2007, with 150 topics having been discussed, the FSN Forum is a thriving online community with 10,000 registered members from 175 countries.

But, this has been much more than just a journey in numbers. As its membership has grown, so have the FSN Forum's ambitions. It has become a repository for the diversity of approaches

towards improved food security and nutrition. Its relevance for FAO and for the world at large has become increasingly visible and tangible.

Recently, the FSN Forum has engaged in partnerships with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the High-Level Panel of Experts for FSN, fora for consultations for the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda, and consultations for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), amongst others. It has provided impetus to those consultations, as much as that it has increased the visibility of the FSN Forum itself.

In its very essence, the FSN Forum is the full embodiment of a true multi-stakeholder approach, which we see as central to any success in improved decision-making and governance for global food security and nutrition.

Yet, much more can be done to service such processes. The immediate plans include the set-up of regional “hubs” that will allow for development practitioners to share knowledge in more targeted ways and tailored to region-specific problems. The organizers of the Forum also intend to intensify discussions that reflect the changing landscape of food security and nutrition, especially in the context of the climate change challenge.

As the FSN Forum faces new challenges and opportunities, we are inviting the Forum’s membership and our regional offices to help us guide the future development of the FSN Forum so that it stay effective, relevant and sustainable for the years to come. These are the main objectives of this workshop and I look forward to your collective contributions to continuously improve the FSN Forum, as well as to prove its relevance.