

**Note to file**

**Summary of papers presented to and discussions held at the following  
Conference organized to contribute to the drafting of voluntary guidelines  
towards the progressive implementation of the right to food**

**The National Committee for Relations between the Italian Government and  
the FAO**

*in co-operation with the*

**International Jacques Maritain Institute  
“THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE COSTS OF HUNGER”  
Rome, Sala di Porta Castello, June 20 - 21, 2003**

***INAUGURAL SESSION***

**Chair:** Vito Tanzi, Under-secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Rome;  
former Director, Fiscal Affairs Department, IMF, Washington, D.C.

**Welcome addresses by:**

Giovanni Alemanno, Minister of Agriculture of the Italian Republic, Rome

Giandomenico Magliano, Director General for Development and Co-operation, Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs, Rome

**Roberto Papini, Secretary General, International Jacques Maritain Institute, Rome**

*RtF is not an economic challenge, it's a social challenge.*

*Papini underlines that the costs of hunger (= the costs of not intervening) include crime,  
terrorism, immigration, lack of productive power, etc.*

**Opening address by: Jacques Diouf, Director General, FAO, Rome**

*The RtF is at the heart of FAO's mission.*

*Hunger is cause and effect of poverty.*

*If the RtF would be fully implemented an increase of 2-4 % of GDP is estimated. Hence, the RtF  
is not only a moral imperative, it makes sense economically.*

**General introduction by:**

**Robert William Fogel, University of Chicago, USA; Nobel Prize for Economics**  
**“The key economic implications and policy issues of development programmes  
with a right to food perspective”.**

*According to the key note speaker, the key factors in achieving greater equity in public health  
status in developing countries are better nutrition and targeted health policies rather than  
advanced medical technology. His studies focus on the critical role of prenatal and early  
childhood care in influencing health over the entire life cycle, including the rate of aging.*

## **I SESSION: “AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD”**

*In this part of the conference the different speakers analyzed the economic implications of the implementation of a RtF framework, each focusing on a specific policy area:*

- *agricultural protection (including subsidies, dumping of export surpluses, etc.);*
- *the role of strong legal, economic & political institutions in fighting poverty and hunger ( this includes not only an examination of key market institutions but also of the importance of well-functioning public institutions such as an effective rule of law system, independent and efficient court systems, effective democratic institutions, etc.);*
- *economic growth, poverty and hunger (why is economic growth important to reduce poverty and hunger ? what are the essential pro-growth policies that poor countries need to adopt?).*

**Chair and introduction:** Masiphula Mbongwa, Deputy Director-General, Agricultural Economics and Business Development, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Pretoria, South Africa; Vice-chair, Committee on World Food Security, Rome

### **Speakers:**

**Csaba Csaki, Senior Advisor of Agricultural Development, The World Bank, Washington, DC, USA : “Trade policies of OECD and developing countries and the right to food”;**

*Csaki focused on the importance of OECD and developing country trade and domestic policy reforms in the implementation of the RtF. He discussed the impacts of OECD agricultural subsidies, the potential gains from trade liberalization. The anti-agriculture bias of policy has to be removed in developing countries. Industrialized countries (OECD countries) should start removing trade distorting subsidies and Non Tariff Barriers (NTB).*

*His statement: Without liberalization no adequate implementation of the RtF is possible! Sound food and agricultural policies and support for effective agricultural inputs and services markets should be introduced.*

- *Food subsidies and Social security Nets (SSN) need to be more targeted towards the poor*

**Sharma, Devinder, Chairman of the Forum for Biotechnology and Food Security, New Delhi “The impact of international trade and economic growth on poor countries”**

*Sharma focused on the adverse impacts of OECD trade policy on developing countries. He introduced a picturesque comparison between quality of life of a small farmer in India and a cow in an industrialized country.*

*The case of India: 550 million farmers produce a huge amount of food surpluses. Nevertheless 250 million people are undernourished in India.*

*According to Sharma the solution is not to increase the productivity of food, its more about encouraging OCED countries to reducing their trade-barriers (India lacks an appropriate export market).*

**Hans Blommestein, Head, Emerging Financial Markets Programme, OECD, Paris, France: “Financial markets and the role of institutions in fighting hunger”;**

*Blommestein’s main objective was to clarify the debate about the RtF from an economic perspective by presenting the key features of a rights-based growth strategy for combating poverty and hunger*

*Human rights constitute the core of the moral and political function of a legal state. This is essential for protecting or guaranteeing human rights and free markets. The economic function on the other hand forms the basis of complex, rights-based markets: The protection of human rights is crucial in designing effective pro-poor -growth and anti-poverty programmes.*

*The best defence against chronic hunger (=famine prevention) is a healthy market economy based on effective market and public institutions that support sustainable economic growth and rising income.*

- *Famine relief can best be handled (according to SEN) by organising public employment with payment in cash wages*

*A rights-based growth strategy is based on the notion that sustainable pro-growth policies should be based on strong democratic institutions, supported first and foremost by the enforcement of human rights. Sound market institutions are needed, including the following two key policy considerations:*

- *The implementation of economic and social rights should not create incentives that are detrimental to economic growth*
- *Their implementation should not hamper institutional reform efforts bringing about better public governance or lead to new obstacles in this area (do not create wrong incentives). → for examples see Blommestein p. 24f.*

**Cohen, Marco, Special Assistant, International Food Policy and Research Institute, Washington: “Institutions, economic growth and right to food”.**

*Economic growth is necessary, but not sufficient for food security and poverty reduction. To achieve the latter appropriate policies and institutions are necessary, i.e.:*

- *Assure poor peoples access to resources*
- *Prohibit discrimination*
- *Appropriate and adequate public investment in infrastructure, agricultural research, health, and education*
- *Good governance, incl. transparency, rule of law, and protection of civil and political rights*

*A broad based agricultural growth would have the biggest impact on poverty alleviation and leads to an overall economic growth. According to IFPRI research in South Africa, an income of 1€ earned in agriculture leads to an income of 3€ in the whole economy.*

*Codification of the RtF in national law and effective enforcement of such laws contributes to economic growth and efficiency. When people have rights that are enforced, this promotes stability and productive activity and lowers transaction costs of public and private investments. Hence, growth contributes to the progressive realization of the RtF and vice versa.*

*According to Cohen 2 billion people worldwide suffer the phenomenon of a so called hidden-hunger, i.e. the lack of Vitamin A kills 125.000 – 250.000 people per year.*

## **II SESSION: “THE ROLE OF FOOD AND SOCIAL SAFETY NETS”**

*This session focused on the role of social safety nets in the implementation of anti-poverty programmes and their related contribution to a right to food (RTF) development perspective. It emphasized experience with social safety nets (including food safety nets) in achieving these objectives and the resulting lessons for governments in designing more effective safety nets.*

**Chair and introduction:** M. S. Swaminathan, Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Madras, India; President, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

### **Speakers:**

**Sanjeev Gupta, Assistant Director, Fiscal Affairs Department, IMF, Washington, D.C., USA: “Safety nets and the implementation of macroeconomic adjustment programmes”;**

*Gupta pointed out that Social Safety Nets are critical for mitigating the costs of crisis and adjustment programs.*

*His main findings:*

- *Having safety nets in place before crisis occur*
- *Generating and maintaining up-to-date information on vulnerable group to facilitate targeting*
- *Ensuring adequate levels of spending that are consistent with sound macroeconomic policy*
- *Food-based safety nets can be an attractive option when administrative capacity is weak*
- *Next steps*
  - *Improve nutrition policies outlined in PRSPs*
  - *Use PSIA (Poverty and Social Impact Analysis) systematically*
  - *Adjusting the size and timing of disbursements*

**Andrew MacMillan, Director, Field Operations Division, FAO, Rome, Italy and Benjamin Davis, Agriculture and Economic Development Analysis Division, FAO, Rome, Italy: “Social safety nets in a right to food context”;**

*According to the two authors, hunger can be seen as being as much a cause as an effect of poverty. Chronically undernourished persons are unable to make any meaningful contribution to economic growth. Reducing hunger today is an investment in growth tomorrow.*

*McMillan and Davis elaborated that targeted safety nets offer the least-cost and quickest route for fulfilling the RtF.*

*Their conclusions:*

- *Safety Nets play a key role in fighting transitory and chronic hunger, including reducing the gravity of food emergencies*
- *It's an investment and a contribution to long term development, not just welfare*

**Pedro Medrano, Country Director, World Food Programme, New Delhi, India: “The experience with food and social safety nets in India”.**

*Medrano presented Indian policy subsequent to the release of the Food Security Atlas of Rural India. The Prime Minister has called for concerted action to achieve substantial freedom from hunger by August 15, 2007 (hunger-free India). Medrano also presented food safety nets in India. In India the RtF is a constitutional right. The Supreme Court plays an active role in assuring that right. Food Safety therefore is not a political choice it's a state-duty.*

### **III SESSION: POLICY ROUND TABLE: “Which Measures to Fight Against Hunger?”**

*In this session, policy recommendations were made by experts and policy-makers on the basis of the papers given in the previous sessions as well as the subsequent discussions. Two rapporteurs presented the key conclusions reached in the I and II session. The policy recommendations were made to the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG, so as to serve as an input for its work on voluntary guidelines designed to support States' efforts to achieve the progressive realization of the right to food.*

**Chair and introduction: Martin Nissen, Ministry for consumer protection and Agriculture of Germany**

**Speakers:**

**Two rapporteurs for the I and II session: Hans Blommestein, OECD, Paris; Pierre Spitz, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Paris, France**

**Kongshaug, Helge Leif, State Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture of Norway**

*Kongshaug stressed the importance of a broad based approach to food security. He also underlined that the right to food put the citizen into the centre of attention of policy making.*

**José Graziano da Silva, Minister for Food Security of Brazil**

*Mr da Silva presented the Brazilian Zero Hunger program, which will be implemented gradually throughout the government's four-year mandate, with the aim of promoting food and nutritional security for all Brazilians. Actually 40 – 55 million people suffer hunger (different estimations). The Zero Hunger program has three pillars:*

- *RtF*
- *Structural reforms, in order not to generate dependency (different projects: 30 \$ additional income for the poor plus supplements for under 6 year old children, literacy campaign, rainwater supply in the dry season, etc.)*
- *Huge participation and solidarity of society*

*Da Silva expects the full amortization of the investment now (100 Million US \$) within a year: increased production and productivity leading to increased revenue from taxes.*

*A short summary in form of a booklet is available.*

**Sergio Marelli, Director, FOCSIV-Fédération des Organismes Chrétiens de Service International Volontaire, Rome, Italy**

*The speaker argued to change the Voluntary Guidelines into a binding document with the power of sanctions. This could lead to a change of international economics – from pure capitalism to an economy of great social justice..*

**Michael Windfuhr, Executive Director, FoodFirst Information & Action Network, Heidelberg, Germany**

*Windfuhr pursued two lines of arguments:*

*The first focused on the economic loss of not implementing the RtF.*

*The second focused on the costs of implementation. Windfuhr pointed out that the state obligation to respect and to protect can be realized without huge investment. The obligation to fulfil has to be supported with combined measures and with the maximum resources available – according to Windfuhr those costs are not unaffordable to a developing country.*

**Concluding Remarks by the Conference Rapporteur: Stefano Zamagni, Bologna University, Italy**

**Final Speech by:** Simone Vieri, University of Rome

## **Annex 1**

### **Some considerations for the RtF-Guidelines deduced from the Conference**

#### ***The broader dimension of a rights based approach***

##### **The moral dimension**

Steps to advance the progressive realization of the RtF are important because of the intrinsic value of this right as per GC12: “... is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the fulfilment of other human rights”.

Every human being is a subject of human rights. A rights based approach empowers people and enhances their capacity to improve the quality of their lives.

Food security depends upon the preservation and enhancement of the full range of human rights and individual liberties. Civil and political rights are essential to advance the progressive realization of the RtF, which should be seen as being privileged . Human rights are an end in themselves and intrinsically valuable, as they are essential to achieving social justice and human security.

The poor should not be patronized but should be treated as partners in achieving the aim of ensuring that every child, woman and man has an opportunity for a productive and healthy life. All strategies should be based on the principle of social inclusion.

### **The legal and political impact**

The value added by the rights based approach is that it spells out obligations and responsibilities of all duty bearers. It gives individuals and groups a claim against the state. The right to adequate food is not based on charity. Over time less people will suffer from hunger if all duty holders perform sincerely.

A rights based approach enables judgements to be made about which policy measures are necessary or should be avoided.

To achieve the objectives of reducing hunger and malnutrition and of advancing nutritional well being for the individual child, woman and man, the right to adequate food is a *necessary*, but not *sufficient* condition.

A rights based approach includes measurements of results and accountability for performance by governments, the international and bilateral institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

A rights based approach can help achieve more effective political mobilization by stimulating more appropriate policies at national and international levels, both bottom up and top down.

Food Safety is not a political choice, it's a state-duty.

### ***The impact of RtF on economic growth***

(Cohen)

Economic growth is necessary, but not sufficient for food security and poverty reduction.

To achieve the latter, appropriate policies and institutions are necessary, i.e.:

- Assure poor peoples access to resources (equity, redistribution policies)
- Prohibit discrimination
- Appropriate and adequate public investment in infrastructure, agricultural research, health, and education
- Good governance, incl. transparency, rule of law, and protection of civil and political rights

(Blommestein)

Human rights constitute the core of the moral and political function of a legal state. This is essential for protecting or guaranteeing human rights and free markets. The economic

function on the other hand forms the basis of complex, rights-based markets: The protection of human rights is crucial in designing effective pro-poor-growth and anti-poverty programmes.

The best defence against chronic hunger is a healthy market economy based on effective market and public institutions that support sustainable economic growth and rising income.

Market-based growth is also the best strategy for the elimination of poverty.

- Famine relief can best be handled (according to SEN) by organising public employment with payment in cash wages

A rights-based growth strategy is based on the notion that sustainable pro-growth policies should be based on strong democratic institutions, supported first and foremost by the enforcement of human rights. Sound market institutions are needed, including the following two key policy considerations:

- The implementation of economic and social rights should not create incentives that are detrimental to economic growth
- Their implementation should not hamper institutional reform efforts bringing about better public governance or lead to new obstacles in this area (do not create wrong incentives). → for examples see Blommestein p. 24f.

(Csaki, Worldbank)

Policy bias against agriculture has to be removed in developing countries. Industrialized countries (OECD countries) should start removing trade distorting subsidies and NTBs. Additionally sound food and agricultural policies and supporting effective market for agricultural inputs and services should be introduced.

- Food subsidies and Social Safety Nets need to be more targeted towards the poor

The following policy reforms are needed in developing countries (those measures are essential but not sufficient):

- Improving the macroeconomic context for agricultural and rural growth
- Supporting an enabling policy environment for agricultural trade and market access
- Introduce sound food and agricultural policies, and supporting effective markets for agricultural inputs and services
- Create legal and regulatory frameworks that facilitate private enterprises
- Continuing land reforms and improving land administration

(Gupta, IMF)

(...) sound macroeconomic policies help prevent crises that can result in drastic declines in the living standard of the population.

(Medrano)

There is need for a paradigm shift to strategies that promote job-led growth (not mass production, but production by the masses).

High growth rate is the best way to fight poverty (e.g. China). The lack of economic growth, not the absence of food, is the main source of poverty in Africa.

### ***The Cost of implementing the RtF***

Cohen introduced the following way to consider the different costs of implementing the RtF

<b>Cost of institutions and organizations</b>	<b>Costs for actions</b>
<b>Fixed costs</b>	<b>Fixed costs</b> Implementing Safety Nets (depends on size of the benefit, number of beneficiaries, ...)
<b>Marginal costs</b> Justice system for establishing and enforcing the RtF (argument: justice system is needed anyway to establish good governance and the rule of law)	<b>Marginal costs</b>

Michael Windfuhr (FIAN) pointed out that the state obligation to respect and to protect<sup>1</sup> can be realized without huge investment.

### ***Benefits of the RtF/Cost of hunger***

(Cohen)

Codification of the RtF in national law and effective enforcement of such laws contributes to economic growth and efficiency. When people have rights that are enforced, this promotes stability and productive activity and lowers transactions costs of public and private investments. Hence, growth contributes to the progressive realization of the RtF and vice versa.

(McMillan, Davis)

Hunger can be seen as being as much a cause as an effect of poverty. Chronically undernourished persons are unable to make any meaningful contribution to economic growth. Reducing hunger today is an investment in growth tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights include the three levels of state obligations: to respect, to protect and to fulfil (to facilitate and to provide)

(Papini)

The costs of hunger (= the costs of not intervening) include crime, terrorism, immigration, lack of productive power, etc.

### ***Practical Aspects / Measures***

(McMillan, Davis)

Too little thorough work has been done on the practical aspects of designing programmes for chronic hunger reduction. One would like to see a much better understanding on at least the two following issues: Firstly, on how to approach the design of least-cost approaches to bringing about the rapid reductions in hunger implied in the concept of RtF. Secondly, how the relationship between food security, political stability and economic growth works at both national and international levels.

McMillan and Davis elaborated that targeted safety nets offer the least-cost and quickest route for fulfilling the RtF.

(Medrano)

By shifting to the attention to individuals, the strategies can help to foster a life cycle approach in nutrition interventions, i.e. pregnant women will need special attention (...) Low birth weight children suffer several handicaps in later life and may not be able to express their innate genetic potential for mental and physical development.

### ***Open questions***

Is a democratic system fundamental for a successful implementation of the RtF?

Arguments:

- Countries with a democratic political system tend to generate higher economic growth, with wealth shared by a wider population (Olsen)
- Democratic countries are also the ones that have managed to prevent famines (Sen)

However, should we call for the implementation of a democratic system in the guidelines or leave this decision to the governments?

Should we demand a dedicated legal system?

Argument:

- (...) common law court procedures are more efficient for dealing with complex, rights-intensive markets than courts from civil law systems (Blommestein p.18)

Who plays the major role in implementing economic and social rights: the public sector (incl. int. institutions) or the private sector?

- Economic and social rights mostly have the character of private or semi-public goods. Therefore they can better be “produced” by the private sector. This would mean in practice that the private sector has a dominant role in realising these economic and social rights. (Blommestein p.27)

## Annex 2

### The following papers were distributed:

- Blommestein, Hans “The role of Global Finance and Markets for a Development model based on human rights”
- Cohen, Marc “The human RtF, Economic growth and Development (Abstract)”
- Csaki, Csaba, “Trade policies of OECD and developing countries and the right to food”
- Fogel, Robert “Nutrition, Physiological Capital, and Equity”
- Gupta, Sanjeev “Safety nets and the Implementation of Macroeconomic Adjustment Programs”(Paper and powerpoint)
- McMillan, Davis “Safety Nets and the RtF”(Paper and Powerpoint printout)
- Medrano, Pedro “The food Safety nets in India”(Abstract)
- Swaminathan “Towards hunger-free India: Count down to 2007”
- José Graziano da Silva, Minister for Food Security of Brazil, “Zero fome” (booklet)

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