



Statement

The Right to Food Guidelines: Making it Happen

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Four years ago, we still did not know if there would be any Right to Food Guidelines – or to name their complete title Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. The adoption of the Guidelines by FAO Council in 2004 is indeed a milestone in the development of the right to food. It reflects FAO's vision of a world without hunger, made possible by linking food security instruments with human rights and governance tools to tackle the root causes of hunger.

In 2004, FAO Council also recommended that FAO members implement the Right to Food Guidelines and asked the Secretariat to support them in these efforts. This presentation will look at developments with regards to implementation from the perspective of FAO.

The Right to Food Unit was created in 2006, with four main areas of activity:

The first relates to capacity development and building awareness and understanding of the right to food. As the right to food is a new concept, this activity was particularly important and a pre-requisite for work in other areas. World Food Day 2007 constituted a major contribution towards this objective. The unprecedented mobilization worldwide confirmed the relevance of, and interest in, the right to food. Another major achievement is the right to food website, with an average of 8500 visitors per month, and placed first on the Yahoo and second on the Google search engines for the words "right to food".

The second area of activity relates to the development of tools and methodologies, as well as studies, to support implementation of the right to food. A series of guides were developed on subjects such as how to legislate, how to monitor, how to assess and how to budget right to food. They are available, as final publications or advance copies, for participants attending the Forum.

A third area of activity relates to integrating right to food into FAO's work. Mainstreaming was particularly successful when dealing with concrete projects and undertaking joint activities, such as those carried out with the Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building Division (KCE) and the Forestry Department, the Nutrition Division and with the Special Programme on Food Security.

The fourth objective is support to countries, based on their requests, which have varied from ad hoc assistance to specific processes to more comprehensive projects covering several mutually reinforcing areas of right to food activities.

Our very first experiences show that the national implementation process evolves around seven practical steps, with capacity development as an integral part of all of them.

The first step is the identification of who hungry people are, where they live, and why their right to food is not being realized. Solid knowledge of the hungry and of the underlying causes of their food insecurity are essential for governments to target policies, laws, institutions and budgets with a view to realizing the right to food. The need for disaggregated data cannot be over-emphasized. Such assessments have been conducted in Bhutan, and the Philippines.

As a second step, countries may assess policies, institutions and budget allocations to better identify obstacles and opportunities for realizing the right to food. The assessment will point out what policy changes and new measures are required to improve food security for all as a matter of rights. Such an analysis has been undertaken in the Philippines and Mozambique.

Thirdly, food security strategies will build on the above assessment and causal analysis and provide a roadmap for coordinated governmental action to progressively realize the right to food. This includes developing food and nutritional security strategies which should have targets, time frames, clearly allocated responsibilities and evaluation indicators that are known to all. Strategies will look at immediate relief as well as the creation of a conducive environment that allows every person to feed himself or herself by their own means. Some

countries have already developed food and nutritional security strategies that focus on the right to food, among them Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique.

The fourth step is essential for the implementation of strategies, policies and programs. The roles and responsibilities of different government sectors and levels must be clearly defined and communicated to ensure transparency and accountability and effective coordination.

An important fifth step is achieved when the right to food is integrated into legislation – e.g. constitution or framework law – : it sets a long-term binding standard for government and stakeholders. Several examples will be discussed at this Forum, for example Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala, and, most recently, the approval of the Constitution of Ecuador.

The sixth step is monitoring. Monitoring impact and outcomes of domestic policies, programmes or projects will make it possible to measure achievements of the stated objectives, fill possible gaps and continuously improve government action.

Finally, the implementation of the right to food requires that recourse mechanisms that enable rights holders to hold government accountable be put in place. A right is not a right if it cannot be claimed. Such mechanisms can be judicial involving an action in court or extrajudicial (ombudsperson, human rights commission). It is important to incorporate operational or administrative recourse mechanisms at project or programme level, to ensure that corrective measures are taken without delay, e.g. in the context of the delivery of services such as social safety nets or school feeding programmes.

Progress with implementation in the short period since the adoption of the Right to Food Guidelines shows us that for many countries, the right to food is here to stay.

What is this Forum about?

The Forum shall demonstrate, with practical examples, how the right to food can contribute to promoting food security for all.

The Forum is about sharing experiences and learning. Up to now, a number of initiatives have been taken by different stakeholders to promote the right to food or certain aspects of it. Valuable experiences have been gained and progress achieved, mostly in the context of “pilot projects”. This Forum is the first ever platform where these lessons learned and experiences can be exchanged, tested and validated among stakeholders at international level. Such an exchange is extremely important for an emerging issue such as right to food

implementation. It helps identify what areas need to be strengthened and affirms what successful choices were made. It also provides new insights and ideas to be pursued in the future.

The Forum is a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue. Civil society organisations and other stakeholders have played an important role during the negotiations of the Right to Food Guidelines. They continue to be an important motor for the right to food agenda and, in many countries, an important partner supporting governmental action in this area. The Forum aims to forge and strengthen this partnership.

It is about knowledge. Knowledge is a resource, a global public good, which is not depleted by its use. On the contrary, the more knowledge that is shared, the more powerful it becomes. The more knowledge is confronted with other insights, the more it is developed, enriched and made relevant for practical use.

Most importantly, the Forum is about strengthening and further promoting the implementation of the right to food. It is not an end. It is the beginning of a new phase of implementation, with greater focus on country level activities, using the knowledge, tools, networks and strategies developed up to now.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues and friends

This is your Forum. I wish you many fruitful exchanges, enriching discussions, stimulating networking and strengthened commitment to promote the realization of the right to food.