

Rationale

The right to food is a basic human right enshrined in international law. It is the right of every person to have continuous access to the resources that are necessary to produce, earn or purchase enough food not only to prevent hunger, but also ensure health and well-being.

The right to food not only addresses the final outcome of food security for all, it also proposes ways and tools by which that goal is reached and achievements maintained in a sustainable manner.

While many food security policies and programmes address essential technical issues, the effectiveness and sustainability of food security work requires addressing **governance** issues. The right to food offers a coherent framework to address critical governance dimensions in the fight against hunger and malnutrition: it provides voice to a wide array of relevant stakeholders and establishes principles that govern decision-making and implementation processes, as participation, non-discrimination, transparency and empowerment. In addition, it provides a legal framework, the concepts of rights and obligations, as well as mechanisms for increased **accountability** and the rule of law.

The right to food approach adds value to food security interventions through the process of **policy** formulation and implementation as well as through the contents of food security work. Regarding the process, the approach contributes to strengthen relevant public institutions, integrates partners such as civil society organizations, human rights commissions, parliamentarians and government sectors other than those dealing with agriculture, and provides further justification for investment in hunger reduction. It contributes to create and maintain political will. Furthermore, it provides means of **coordination** of food security initiatives aiming at increased policy coherence.

FAO and its partners have been hard at work over the last few years to follow up on the **Right to Food Guidelines**. Around the world, people have been demanding action on the right to food and many governments have heeded the call, or taken initiatives to strengthen the implementation of the right to food as a human right. Brazil and Guatemala have adopted framework law on food security that recognize the right to food and establish institutional mechanisms. Drafts have been prepared and are awaiting adoption in Peru, Nicaragua. Drafting processes have started in South Africa, Paraguay, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda. Bolivia has amended its constitution to strengthen the protection of the right to food. The judiciary in India and Brazil has taken up right to food violations in court cases. National human rights institutions in South Africa, India, Brazil and Guatemala have focused on monitoring of right to food realization and violations. FIAN, ActionAid, Right to Food India, Brazilian Action for the Human Right to Adequate Food, ESCR-Net have campaigned for the right to food and empowered individuals to claim their rights. Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique have revised their food security strategies to incorporate the right to food.

FAO has acted as a facilitator of contacts between different actors and has harnessed much of the experience of governments, NGOs and academics throughout the world. It has produced a toolkit on monitoring, assessing, budgeting, legislating and teaching the right to food, using participatory methodologies to complement a sound technical knowledge.

The Right to Food Forum is being convened by FAO from 1-3 October to review achievements and draw lessons learned from the experiences of key players in the field of the right to food. A number of country experiences will be presented and working groups will focus on the following thematic areas:

- (i) Advocacy and Training.
- (ii) Information and Assessment.
- (iii) Legislation and Accountability.
- (iv) Strategy and Coordination.
- (v) Benchmarks and monitoring.

By putting into effect what is required in these five areas, countries will establish a stronger, more knowledgeable voices among both duty-bearers and right-holders, ensure right targeting, accessible justice, effective action and durable impact, and thus contribute profoundly to sustainable development and the achievements of the MDGs.