
September 2013



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Fortieth Session

Rome, Italy, 7-11 October 2013

POLICY ROUNDTABLE: BIOFUELS¹ AND FOOD SECURITY

The Committee

Welcomes the work of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on Biofuels and Food Security and the relevant report.

Recalls the outcomes of the Committee's deliberations on 'Food Price Volatility' in October 2011, in particular CFS 37 Final report paragraphs 50 i) and o).

Highlights that energy and food security are closely linked and acknowledges the challenge of achieving both food security and energy security, considering the four dimensions of food security (availability, access, stability and utilization).

Takes note of the various drivers of biofuel development, including energy security, climate change mitigation, export markets development, and rural development.

Recognises that biofuel development encompasses both opportunities and risks in economic, social and environmental aspects, depending on context and practices.

¹ In this document the term biofuels refers to all types of biofuels (gaseous, liquid and solid) as all types can influence one or another dimension of food security.

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Underscores that food security and the right to food should be priority concerns in the design of biofuel policies and operations, and that women and smallholders are central to food security, and therefore must be given due consideration in the development of biofuels, while considering varied national contexts.

Acknowledges that

- The links between biofuels and food security are multiple and complex and can occur in different ways at different geographic levels (local, national, regional, global) and time scales. Therefore, their assessment has to be multi-faceted and contextualised, and an integrated, evidence-based, gender-sensitive and environmentally-sound approach is required in biofuel policy-making and investments;
- Production and consumption of biofuels, amongst many other factors, influence international agricultural commodity prices. The interaction between biofuels, food prices and supply responses is dynamic and complex, and requires a distinction between short-term and long-term impacts;
- Significant guidance is available to minimize the risks and maximize the opportunities of biofuels in relation to food security. This includes in particular the CFS Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF), the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in The Context of National Food Security (VGGT), The Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy and FAO Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) Approach.

Stresses the need for concerted international and national action to ensure that biofuel development and policies are consistent with the objective to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, and contributes to sustainable rural development and poverty reduction, bearing in mind varied national contexts.

Encourages governments and other stakeholders to ensure coordination between food security and energy security strategies.

Recommends the following action points, their development and implementation, by the appropriate stakeholders.

1. Actions to improve the integration of biofuel and food security policies and initiatives

- a. Governments, AMIS, GBEP, FAO, IFPRI and other international organizations are encouraged to regularly share with CFS the results of their work on biofuels-food security linkages.
- b. Governments, FAO, other regional and international organizations, and research and associated institutions are encouraged to promote and facilitate exchange of information and cooperation on all factors that influence biofuels and food security links. This includes analysis, assessments and projections as well as providing transparent information on assumptions, methods, tools and data.
- c. Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to implement policies and investments for the production of biofuels and food in an integrated, gender-sensitive and internationally coordinated way, by integrating food security -related factors in biofuel strategies, and food crisis response plans as well as designing countervailing measures regarding vulnerable groups.
- d. Governments and other appropriate stakeholders are encouraged to review biofuels policies - where applicable and if necessary - according to balanced science-based assessments of the opportunities and challenges they may present for food security so that biofuels can be produced where it is socially, economically and environmentally feasible to do so.
- e. Governments and other appropriate stakeholders are encouraged to develop risk management instruments, including for mitigating the impact of price shocks, and recommend their mainstreaming into national food security strategies focused on mitigating risk for the most

vulnerable against food price volatility. Attention should also be given to the inclusion of best practices and lessons learned for vulnerable small-scale food producers.

- f. FAO, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is invited to make proposals to be discussed in CFS on possible contingency plans to adjust, on a voluntary basis, policies, that stimulate biofuel production or consumption when global food markets are under pressure and food supplies are endangered. These proposals should be based on a balanced and science-based review of options, lessons learned and best practices. They would also consider how both food crises and biofuels development affect men and women differently
- g. FAO, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, is invited to prepare toolkits to devise and assess integrated food security and sustainable biofuel policies and initiatives at multiple levels (global, regional, national and sub-national), for consideration by CFS. This would be primarily based on existing material (e.g. Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure/VGGT, the principles for responsible agricultural investments/rai currently being discussed under CFS, GBEP sustainable bioenergy indicators, and FAO BEFS Approach). This would support the efforts of Members and international initiatives in that respect. This work could also help developers and users of biofuel certification schemes ensure that these adequately consider the four dimensions of food security. Equal attention should be given to the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in designing, implementing and monitoring biofuel policies, investments and operations.
- h. FAO, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, is invited to propose a programme of work aimed at strengthening the capacity of interested countries and operators to assess their biofuel potential taking into account food security concerns, manage the related risks and opportunities, and monitor impacts. This programme could take advantage of the GBEP capacity building programme.

2. Actions to promote Research and Development (R&D) on biofuels and food security

- a. R&D has an important role to play in improving the efficiency of the technologies used for biofuels regarding both resources and processes. Adequate technical and financial support should be given to research partners in this field. Research partners are encouraged to devise solutions adapted to the needs of all stakeholders, including those in least-developed countries and of women and smallholders who are most in need of access to modern energy services. International cooperation (including south-south cooperation) and public-private partnerships have an important role to play in supporting these research topics. It is important to ensure that lessons learned from these partnerships are reflected in future cooperation.
- b. Food security, smallholder and gender concerns should be included in the design and evaluation of R&D on sustainable biofuels pathways.
- c. R&D should strengthen capabilities to assess the agronomic, technical and economic feasibility of adapting biofuel production and processing units so that they can modulate their supply chain between food, feed and energy in order to react flexibly to fluctuations in food markets.

3. Actions to foster comprehensive food-energy security policies and programmes

- a. In a transition towards coordinated food and energy security policies and low carbon development, governments, international organizations and other stakeholders are encouraged to support more energy and other resource use efficiency, increased use of renewable energy and improved access to sustainable energy services in agrifood chains according to each country's specificities.
- b. Governments and operators should support smallholder participation, in particular women, in food-energy security programmes (including on biofuel production and consumption), on the basis of fair and equitable conditions of market access, labour conditions and contractual arrangements.

- c. CFS encourages public and private sectors to support the integration of sustainable biofuel production into agricultural and forestry policies and the development and implementation of integrated food-energy security solutions for increased resource efficiency and sustainability.