



In the 1996 **World Food Summit Action Plan**, FAO's Member States reaffirmed their commitment to, "implementation and full and progressive realization of this right as a means of achieving food security for all." FAO is working with governments to incorporate the Right to Food Guidelines into policies and legislation and to adopt rights-based food security strategies. The Right to Food Unit is actively informing and training and is helping develop capacity in the areas of legislation, policy, assessment, monitoring and accountability.

Incorporating human rights principles into traditional development approaches may supply the "missing element," which has prevented 50 years of development aid from overcoming poverty. **Empowerment is a key to moving away from the benevolence model of aid to a sustainable, enabling environment in which people can feed themselves.** A rights-based approach can help not only achieve food security, but also to meet international poverty reduction goals, while simultaneously recognizing human dignity and the inherent worth of every individual.

**W**e have the means to achieve full realization of the right to food for all. It can be done and now is the time to make it happen.

*Make it happen.*



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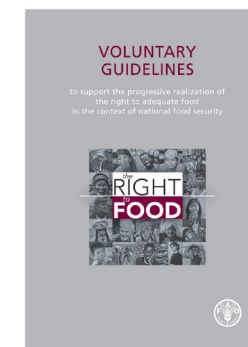
## WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO FOOD?

### Right to Food = Human Right

**The right to food is the right to feed oneself in dignity.** It is the right to have continuous access to the resources that will enable you to produce, earn or purchase enough food to not only prevent hunger, but also to ensure health and well-being. The right to food only rarely means that a person has the right to free handouts.

States ratifying the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** have legally bound themselves to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food. While this treaty was an essential first step, there was little progress toward realizing this right until the 1996 World Food Summit, when Heads of State and Government issued the **Rome Declaration** reaffirming, "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."

The assembly's action plan called for clarification of, "the content of the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger." When FAO's Council adopted the **Right to Food Guidelines** (full title Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security) in 2004, an important milestone toward implementation was reached; the world finally had a tool explaining exactly what realizing the right to food entailed and describing specific actions that will lead to realizing this human right for all.



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## Stakeholders = Everyone

**Every human being is a rights holder.** Every individual not only has the right to feed themselves and their family in dignity, but also has the responsibility to do everything within their power to do so. This means the every person must have access to resources and the freedom to exercise their human rights and responsibilities.

As duty bearers, states have obligations toward the right to food. **Respect** prevents a state from placing barriers before those who want to feed themselves; **Protect** ensures that no one interferes with another's right to food; **Fulfil** means that a state should **facilitate** by establishing an enabling environment, eliminating discrimination wherever it exists and should **provide** direct food aid when situations beyond a person's control make them unable to provide for themselves. This includes soliciting international assistance when a state's best efforts prove insufficient.

Efforts toward implementing the right to food must begin with an assessment of the hungry, poor, marginalized and vulnerable. States also need to assess their policies and laws to ensure that adequate redress mechanisms are available for holding duty bearers accountable.

Rights holders should take part in discussions and decision-making on programmes and policies aimed at realizing their right to food and in monitoring progress. Full, free and meaningful participation not only promotes human dignity, it also leads to better prioritizing and targeting actions. Inclusion increases state transparency and accountability, generates more efficient governing and in the end, contributes to reducing poverty. The principle of non-discrimination requires government policies grant women and men of all racial, ethnic or cultural groups, especially the marginalised, full and equal access to productive and economic resources, including inheritance, ownership of land and other property and access to credit and appropriate technology.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "every individual and every organ of society" is responsible for promoting respect, recognition and observance of human rights. Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations are essential for advocacy and capacity building. They are vital for organizing marginalized target groups, facilitating their legal access and helping present their needs to appropriate government agencies.

**Private sector corporations should ensure that their behaviour does not impair human rights and every state needs to protect its people from negative impacts that corporate activities might have on their right to food.** Multilateral organizations can assist governments to act in ways which are consistent with human rights obligations. Whether helping to design policies, strategies and programmes, delivering assistance, or negotiating trade, finance and investment, they should strive for sustainability and full respect of human dignity and human rights.

## Information = Power

Only by understanding their rights can individuals be empowered to demand realization of them. Well-informed journalists can accurately explain the right to food as an empowerment, rather than charity. Knowledge allows UN officers and country teams to support implementation efforts. Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations can strengthen awareness about rights and obligations for all stakeholders.

Information is only first step; governments should also develop the capacity to carry out their obligations and to devise policies that address individuals' specific needs. Government officials, law-makers and judges must know how to create and implement appropriate legislation. Ministries of agriculture, trade, industry and economy must know which actions will facilitate people feeding themselves. Social development ministries and social workers must learn how to implement state obligations toward persons who cannot feed themselves.



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## 2007 = Commitment

Food security exists when everyone has stable access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life. When the "right to food" is added to this equation, we begin looking beyond the outcome – freedom from hunger and malnutrition – at an interactive process in which individuals become empowered partners in making policy decisions that affect their right to adequate food.

Only through effective **human rights-oriented policies and coordinated rights-based strategies** can duty bearers fulfil their obligation to enable rights holders to feed themselves. Any sector policies that affect the right to food should be designed to address the underlying causes of poverty and hunger. A human rights-based approach considers each individual's inherent right to provide for self and family and empowers every person, through a legal and policy framework, to demand action from their governments, while simultaneously helping governments establish systems that ensure accountability.

**T**he right to food is a right for all, an obligation for the 156 States that have ratified the Covenant and a moral responsibility for society as a whole.