



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Fifteen years implementing the Right to Food Guidelines

Reviewing progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda

SUMMARY

Introduction

While the last century has seen great socio-economic progress and significant welfare improvements worldwide, much remains to be done to fulfil FAO vision of creating a world free from hunger and malnutrition.

The Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (Right to Food Guidelines) have introduced a blueprint that has influenced the global agenda to eradicate hunger and malnutrition over the past 15 years and is still relevant to today's global efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, grounded in human rights and hence recalling the importance of the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food for all.

The Right to Food Guidelines and the right to adequate food as a human right

In 2004, following two years of international negotiations, the FAO Council adopted by consensus the Right to Food Guidelines. This human rights-based practical tool is a voluntary document that presents customizable policy guidance for nineteen areas of action conducive to the realization of the right to adequate food. Rather than marking an end point, their adoption has proved to be a moment of transition and evolution, embodying the momentum and commitment that existed at that time.

Implementing the Right to Food Guidelines: good practices and lessons learned

Over the past 15 years, stakeholders, and particularly States, have made great strides in developing, adopting, implementing and monitoring actions and processes geared towards the realization of the right to adequate food.

“The Right to Food Guidelines offer concrete practical guidance on ways to make notable progress towards meeting the 17 SDGs and their targets.”

Legislative developments

The main ways through which legislative actions can be taken are:

- ▶ Including the right to adequate food in the **constitution**;
- ▶ Adopting a **framework law** on the right to adequate food; and
- ▶ Ensuring the coherence of **sectoral legislation**.

Countries taking any of such steps and included in this review are: Brazil, Egypt, Cuba, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Maldives, Fiji, Ecuador, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Panama, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Cabo Verde, Zanzibar in the United Republic of Tanzania, India, Peru, France, Italy, Montenegro, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Uganda. At regional level, actions taken by the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) are also presented.

Policy developments

The review highlights efforts in designing policies and strategies which have brought to an explicit inclusion of key elements of the Right to Food Guidelines in the following countries: Grenada, Jamaica, Guyana, Bhutan, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Peru, Uganda, Colombia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), and, as a municipal example, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). The key aspect of these policy developments is that they are based on human rights hence include specific components and principles:

- ▶ A high level of **accountability**, based on clear identification of **responsibilities** and definition of **timeframes** for achievement of objectives and goals;
- ▶ Effective horizontal and vertical **coordination** among government institutions and between national and subnational levels of government;
- ▶ Meaningful **participation** of civil society and of representatives of the most food-insecure and marginalized population groups;
- ▶ High level of **political commitment** and support which translates into adequate and sustained **funding** of policy measures; and
- ▶ Effective **monitoring** of emerging threats to the protection and realization of the right to adequate food, and of progress made with the realization of the right to adequate food.

Institutional developments

The review presents three categories of institutions: executive and legislative bodies, human rights institutions and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Four essential dimensions stand out as catalysts of efficiency and sustainability in such institutions: capacity, participation, accountability and transparency. The examples included are from Brazil, Guatemala, South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Kenya. Among the IFIs, the review brings us the examples of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). This publication also highlights the experiences from the parliamentary alliances and fronts against hunger and malnutrition, observatories on the right to adequate food, and the World Banana Forum, as multistakeholder initiatives for the progressive realization of the right to food.

Challenges to address as we reach 2030

In a complex world that is revealing a deteriorating food security and nutrition outlook, the Right to Food Guidelines are more relevant than ever. Progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its goals will be hampered by a 'business as usual' approach. One of the main messages of the Right to Food Guidelines is that a substantial paradigm shift is required to redefine how policy-making must impact the achievement of the SDGs and beyond. It is necessary to truly resonate with the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, and to prioritize the most vulnerable, not just the needs but their entitlements, which should be appropriately met through the responsibility and accountability of duty-bearers.

The Guidelines remind us of the need to look at policy-making through a human rights-based approach (HRBA) from design through to implementation and monitoring. The review reminds us that a HRBA also needs to be used as we prioritize critical **global challenges** which in fact were already relevant and discussed in the Right to Food Guidelines 15 years ago:

- ▶ Sustainable food systems;
- ▶ Access to resources and markets;
- ▶ Climate change; and
- ▶ Protracted crises.

Takeaways with an eye on the future

The examples included in the review by no means represent the length and complexity of actions that have been taken by actors to promote, through the Right to Food Guidelines, the right to food around the world. With such a wealth of experience acquired, this instrument can still make a substantial and decisive contribution to those efforts in the years to come, in particular accelerating progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

These policy messages can help guide our future actions:

Evidence-based analysis, information and monitoring are necessary for increased accountability to progressively realize the right to adequate food and achieve the SDGs.

Knowledge and access to information empower rights-holders to enjoy the whole extent of the right to adequately feed themselves in dignity.

There is a need for multistakeholder efforts counting on all partners to fully implement the 2030 Agenda.

The Right to Food Guidelines promote policy coherence to achieve the SDGs.

Vulnerabilities are evolving in a changing world and efforts need to meet and address those changes.

The right to development is a common vector to achieve an adequate standard of living for all.

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