



**Coordination Team of the UN System High Level Task Force for the  
Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF)**

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# **INFORMATION NOTE ON THE WORK OF THE UN SYSTEM HIGH-LEVEL TASK FORCE FOR THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY CRISIS**

Chair: Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General  
Vice-Chair: Mr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)  
Special Adviser on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)  
United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)  
United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA)  
United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)  
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries Landlocked  
Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS)  
World Bank (WB)  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Trade Organization (WTO)

Coordinator: Dr. David Nabarro, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

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## INTRODUCTION

The conditions that led to the food and energy prices spikes of 2008 can re-emerge anytime. But the situation is now more treacherous as a result of the worldwide contraction of market economies which has slashed the purchasing power of millions of people. This has increased the numbers who depend on food production and processing as a buffer in the face of repeated economic, climatic and political shocks.

Just over a year ago the Chief Executives Board established the UN System High Level Task Force (HLTF) on the Global Food Security Crisis to coordinate UN system and International Financial Institutions efforts to pursue immediate and long term goals in relation to food security. The 22 entities within the HLTF encourage coordinated and integrated actions that are vital for realizing Millenium Development Goal 1 (reducing poverty and hunger), for promoting social and economic resilience, and for creating viable employment opportunities within communities.

The HLTF developed a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) in July 2008. The CFA emphasizes that food insecurity is a serious global threat requiring a responsive approach that protects the most vulnerable in the short term and develops sustainable food systems in the long term. Such approach is also to respond to all dimensions of food and nutrition security: availability, access and utilization.

Since his appointment, BAN Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General and Chair of the HTLF has advocated for greater national and international investment in global food security. He and members of the HLTF have repeatedly called for sufficient funding to meet the assessed needs of those dependent on food assistance and safety nets and of smallholder farmers (especially women) to benefit from higher productivity, new technologies, opportunities for child care and better nutrition. Countries are calling for technical assistance to enable their populations to have better access to land, credit, irrigation, seeds, fertilizers, fodder and other essential inputs, and enable private sector engagement in all aspects of the food value chain.

### I. HELPING NATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO TACKLE FOOD INSECURITY: BRIEF OVERVIEW

**Scaling up support for National Authorities:** During 2008 the HLTF scaled up support to national authorities as they responded to the food price crisis. HLTF agencies supported provision of safety nets and food assistance together with longer-term support to improve production and increase resilience of farmers in the face of price volatility and other external shocks:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) assisted small farmers during the fall planting seasons and are supporting programmes aiming at strengthening their capacities.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) ramped up food assistance operations for an additional 30 million people, to reach over 100 million people. It is now increasingly purchasing locally produced food for its operations and school feeding programmes, and is leveraging food assistance to support longer term hunger solutions and small holder farmers, including through the "Purchase for Progress" initiative.
- The World Bank has intensified investment operations through a Global Food Crisis Response Programme (GFRP) with focus on rapidly disbursing assistance to address immediate needs through budget support, social protection programs and support to the agricultural sector: around USD 780 million of the USD 1.2 billion approved funds has been disbursed within a year.

- UNICEF has intensified its focus on responses to the nutritional impact of the combined food and economic crises, while the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has helped governments address the critical inter-relationships between food systems, social protection, rural development and poverty reduction through measures including coordinating agency responses in selected countries.
- The Emergency Relief Coordinator decided to set aside USD 100 million within the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to respond to the food crisis while OCHA developed country interagency contingency plans.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stepped up its balance of payment financing for low income countries suffering from food price shocks and provides advice on appropriate macroeconomic policy responses.

**Results achieved after one year:** One year after the establishment of HLTF there has been intense activity by the full range of agencies working together. HLTF agencies have (i) enabled millions of farmers to plant crops and enjoy higher yields and over 30 million vulnerable households to enjoy better nutrition, particularly child nutrition through targeted protein supplementation, health and school feeding programs; (ii) improved early warning systems (iii) strengthened policy monitoring and advice together with direct support for policy interventions in over 20 countries; (iv) disbursed over USD 0.5 billion in targeted IMF lending under poverty reduction and exogenous shocks facilities; (v) enhanced or created new social safety nets and social risk mitigation programs in over 50 countries, including conditional and unconditional cash transfer programs and food-for-work programs; and (vi) intervened to reduce/eliminate regional and global agricultural trade distortions and to complete the Doha round of trade negotiations.

**Sustaining intensified action in 2009 and 2010 with concerted focus on long-term issues:** There is a major and continuing need for intensified action during 2009 and 2010 both as a response to the immediate needs of food insecure populations (with WFP experiencing a serious shortfall in its income for 2009) and for the stimulus to production that can result from increased investment in agriculture. The HLTF will continue to work with national and regional partners to address longer-term structural and policy issues a) to avert a worsening of the current situation, and b) to meet future food security needs (exacerbated by climate change). Using the Right to Food as a starting point, there is a continuing need for joint action to tackle hunger, price volatility, dysfunctional trading systems, insufficient access to agricultural inputs and markets and lack of social protection.

## **II. COORDINATION WITHIN THE HLTF**

The HLTF is all about ensuring coordination between the efforts of its members and their partners, and working to support country-owned and country-driven action. Emphasis is given to synergy of policies, action and the delivery of results. Stronger and better partnerships are encouraged, as is advocacy for sustained support to national efforts.

**Programme of Work and HLTF Coordination Team:** The HLTF agreed on a Programme of Work for the collective pursuit of the Comprehensive Framework for Action. It also requested a small Coordination Team to support and catalyze coordinated HLTF agencies' work at country, regional and global level and encourage the effective and coordinated pursuit of CFA outcomes. The Coordination Team, which started to operate in March 2009 through a central hub at IFAD in Rome, now includes six country support staff, an information manager, an officer in the office of the UN Secretary General, a network manager and a support staff. The Team engages with the UN Development Group (UNDG), supports Resident Coordinators and World Bank Country Directors (and other in-country and regional

focal points for coordination) and offers backing for food security work within UNDAFs, Poverty Reduction Strategies and other country owned plans and programs that are related to food security.

**Concerted support to national authorities:** During the last year the HLTF has worked together in support of the 62 countries most in need of help along the lines outlined in the CFA. Coordinated efforts to realize CFA outcomes are being promoted in 35 countries. To better address coordination challenges, the HLTF Coordination Team is initiating regular dialogue with in-country UN staff and partners, civil society and national authorities – this has started in 15 countries. The purpose is to facilitate coordination and catalyze partnerships in support of food and nutrition security. Findings of this country-level dialogue and anticipated follow up work can be found on [www.un-foodsecurity.org](http://www.un-foodsecurity.org).

**Coordination within regional entities:** the HLTF members are aligning their support with regional entities in Africa such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They also participate in the dialogue with African authorities on the implementation and evolution of this framework. The HLTF is working with CAADP on ways to enrich African institutions and networks as they address food insecurity, and support regional integration as well as the round table process and compact development. When compacts have been developed and signed the HLTF helps countries to locate resources for their national plans. The HLTF also participates actively in the implementation of the regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP) adopted by ECOWAS by sharing analysis and studies as well as early information on intended projects. The HLTF is joining the efforts of the Secretary-General's Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group, a consortium of eight major multilaterals, to follow through on existing commitments to support development in Africa.

**Coordination with civil society and business:** The HLTF engage with civil society groups and businesses in policy dialogue, programme development and implementation through partnering. They do this at national, regional and global levels. Within countries, the HLTF seek to revitalize and strengthen existing partnerships so as to encourage open dialogue and synergy of action. Partnerships that include all stakeholders are essential elements of effective coordination.

**Coordination – especially at country level – is valued by donors:** In September 2008 officials from the European Commission (EC) made available to the UN system, the World Bank and some regional organizations a major portion of the one billion Euros in emergency assistance committed under the Food Facility to reduce the immediate impacts of the food crisis on vulnerable populations. The Commission's focus is on: (a) safety nets to ensure the well-being of populations vulnerable to effects of the crisis, and (b) boosts to food production and marketing among smallholder farmers. Funds are being applied to existing projects that address these needs and can be scaled up in order to absorb and make good use of additional funds as well as to new, quick disbursing beneficiary country identified initiatives. The HLTF Coordination Team formed a bridge between the UN agencies, the World Bank and other interested parties (including the European institutions). More recently, the efforts of the HLTF have been recognized in the L'Aquila joint statement on Global Food Security signed by 26 Heads of state.

**Coordination of Multilateral Financing for Food Security:** The HLTF have agreed – where possible - to assist in the coordination of multilateral financial investments in food security at the country level in developing countries (with a particular emphasis on smallholder agriculture systems). This coordination builds on functioning national and regional coordination procedures. Building on experience with the EC Food Facility the HLTF is in a position to coordinate both existing assistance and new contributions.

### **III. IMPLEMENTING THE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION (CFA): WHAT CAN BE LEARNT FROM PROGRESS TO DATE?**

The CFA serves several purposes. First – linking humanitarian, development and trade dimensions of food security by reflecting the comparative advantage and knowledge of different international organizations. Second – serving as a manifesto that embraces the full range of policies and actions already underway in response to the food challenge, and to support the achievement of critical MDGs that are especially threatened under current circumstances. Third – sustaining a consensus on responses to food insecurity by laying out actions needed (a) to meet immediate needs of vulnerable populations and (b) to build longer-term food security and societal resilience.

One year on it is clear that more emphasis should be given to the food and nutrition security dimensions of the right to food, of trade in food and of links between employment and food security. The CFA will be revised shortly to include these emphases.

**The right to food:** The UN Secretary General identified the right to food as a third track of the CFA at the Madrid High Level Conference on Food Security in January 2009. He and others in the HLTF emphasized the need to cover both production and all aspects of the food system, including processing, distribution/marketing, and the consumption of food, from a rights perspective. This means that efforts should be made to ensure every one, including the most marginalized, has a right to access at all times affordable and adequate food or means for its procurement, without compromising other human rights, such as the right to health and education. It also requires ensuring participation of all stakeholders, including those most marginalized, in the assessment, design, development, adoption, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies and programmes relevant to food and nutrition security. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food is working relentlessly towards this goal and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has recently joined the HLTF. Some of the UN human rights presences are planning to conduct monitoring and/or provide technical assistance on the right to food at country level in the next biennium.

**Trade in food:** Local, regional and international trade is a key component of solutions to food insecurity. The financing of the food trade and access to trade credits is essential to facilitate cross border movement of products. The elimination of distorting subsidies is key to establishing a fair trading environment for poor countries. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are providing a platform for discussion and action. Export restrictions and extraordinary taxes are particularly detrimental when it comes to humanitarian food aid. Despite a decrease in the number of countries applying these measures, they remain in place in some and continue negatively to affect WFP's ability to procure humanitarian food. These market instabilities increase transport costs and lengthen delivery times.

**Employment:** Decent work is a key element of food security. The creation of jobs, occupational safety nets and health, entrepreneurship, child labor and gender issues all need attention in conjunction with The International Labour Organization (ILO). Indeed ILO is now a member of the HLTF and ready to mobilize its network of employers' and workers' organizations at international and national level.

**Country-level experiences:** Efforts to implement action for food security in country reveal the following:

1. **Hunger is a political liability for national governments.** Hunger caused food riots in 2008 and will contribute to discontent and frustration as long as it persists. As a greater number of people become uncertain about their access to food in the face of climate change they will increasingly expect to be protected by their governments.

2. **A comprehensive response is essential** both to immediate and long term challenges, with priority on improving access to food and nutrition support for the most vulnerable, including through well-designed, fiscally sustainable safety nets, and investment in food systems and infrastructure that support smallholder production and markets, backed with fair trading systems that respond to the interests of poor people.
  3. **The response should be generated from within communities** (and – ideally – led by them). This means investing in the empowerment of communities affected by uncertainty and at risk of food insecurity. It means providing support to local, regional and central governments and facilitating their links with community organizations and the private sector. The response should link urgent life-saving needs with long term remedies for the structural causes of food insecurity.
  4. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships are a vital platform for resilience**, confidence building and empowerment. Most food in developing countries is produced by poor farmers. Because of uncertainty in energy markets, and lack of clarity as to when global economic growth will resume, these farmers cannot be confident year-on-year that they will be able to meet the costs of their inputs in the next growing season with resources they currently own. Smallholders are the engine for recovery during the recession. The goal is to increase their resilience and productivity. To these ends they must be fully engaged in the development dialogue and linked effectively to sources of finance and technology and to markets, including by leveraging food assistance, while mitigating any risks incurred by increased productivity and diversified production. Adequate farm, community and rural infrastructure must also be in place to maximise production, support crop drying and storage and facilitate market access.
  5. **Additional investment is necessary:** Sustained action to improve food security calls for increased investment of public and private funds and the capacity needed to make optimum use of these funds. Developing country governments are reviewing the proportion of their national budgets dedicated to agriculture and food security often focusing on the infrastructure necessary to attract additional private sector investment. Today the total volume of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) invested in agriculture is one third of the amount provided in the 1970s. There are signs that the trend will be reversed: if the resources pledged at the 2009 L’Aquila summit are realized we should expect to see a doubling in ODA for agriculture within three years. Meanwhile many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America remain critically short of the funds needed to ensure food security for all their people.
  6. **Interconnections:** Major global issues are interconnected. Climate change will impact food price volatility: increases in the frequency and severity of extreme weather and climate-driven water scarcity and soil degradation have already affected food prices. The current economic downturn triggered by the financial crisis is deeply affecting developing countries. Weakening export markets due to recession, declines in prices of agricultural commodities, falls in direct foreign investment and remittances, all threaten to undermine the hard won gains in reducing poverty and hunger achieved in recent years.
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