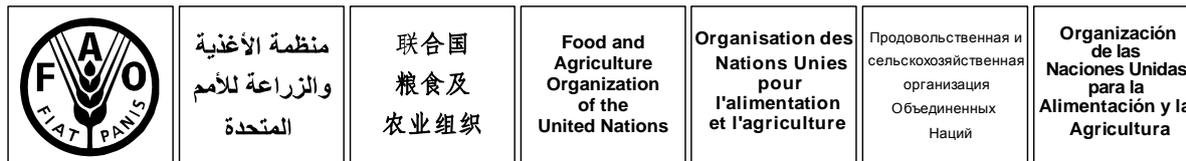


March 2014



FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

Thirty-third Session

Santiago, Chile, 6 to 9 May 2014

Panel 1: Governance for Food and Nutrition Security in Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Achieving the Right to Food involves improving the governance¹ of food systems on the basis of participation, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and accountability.
2. Food and nutrition security, which is a prerequisite for enforcing the Right to Food, is a multi-dimensional or multi-pillar concept involving availability, access, stability and use. This necessarily affects decision-making at various levels for general and sectorial policies.
3. Progress in food and nutrition security therefore depends not only on public policies conducive to improved performance and coordination in productive, social, commercial, economic, environmental and health sectors, but also on the participation of many stakeholders (public, private and civil-society actors) in the framework of food-system governance.

Some of the Region's Challenges that Require Improved Governance

4. Improved governance facilitates coordination and agreement mechanisms for the various positions of stakeholders involved, thereby ensuring that the main challenges that the world (and particularly Latin America and the Caribbean) faces in achieving food and nutrition security are tackled more effectively.
5. Production and food price rises and volatility: Despite being a net food exporter and producing enough to feed its entire population, Latin America and the Caribbean faces challenges in guaranteeing stable availability of food in some Member Nations and population groups. Moreover, since the world crisis of 2008, the new higher and more volatile level of food prices in the past 30 years calls for concerted action in guaranteeing access to food for the most vulnerable populations.

¹ Governance relates to formal and informal rules and processes through which public and private actors articulate their interests and decisions are made, implemented and sustained (FAO, 2011). In this sense, although governmental stakeholder play a dominant role in national, regional and global governance bodies, governance should be understood as a process of social coordination in which the various Member Nation powers, their autonomous institutions, the private sector, civil society and international cooperation generate guidelines for regulation and actions on the key issues of food and nutrition security.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
a FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



mj926e

6. Both phenomena require decisions on increasing information for transparency in agri-food markets, on mutual agreements involving small-scale farmers in intra-regional circuits, on promotion of agreements and mechanisms facilitating intra-regional trade, as well as on measures designed to improve people's incomes. As part of the wide range of measures to tackle the situation, the Region could seize the opportunity offered by its strong involvement in world food production and trade to analyse shared positions within world governance mechanisms such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), as well as in the World Trade Organization, the G-20, G-77, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the FAO Regional Conference itself (FAO, 2012a).

7. Natural Resources: Sustainable intensification of food production remains an ongoing challenge in ensuring food and nutrition security at the regional and global levels. The intensification must be socially- and ecologically-sustainable, with any projected sectorial growth including the heterogeneity of food produced through enhanced family farming, and in some instances converting natural resources into public goods under binding decisions (FAO, 2012b). In this connection, the Region must deal with the limited access to natural resources afford to the most vulnerable populations (i.e. access to drinking and irrigation water). The Region must also deal with unequal land access that is partly attributable to tenure concentration and foreign ownership patterns. These scenarios need to be envisaged against the backdrop of climate change and appropriate adaptation for agricultural investment (FAO, 2013a).

8. Urbanization, Changes in Consumption Habits and Obesity: Most of the Region's Member Nations are now defined as middle-income countries with large urban populations. These factors significantly impact on means of guaranteeing food and nutrition security (FAO, 2013b). Fairer mechanisms and agreements linking producers in chains are required, as well as promotion of access to healthy, varied and culturally- acceptable food and creation of national and regional (fiscal or legal) incentives to ensure protection against foods with high levels of unhealthy fats, sugar and salt for the more vulnerable populations.

9. Information and Evidence for Decision-Making: Governance, as a process of social coordination in decision-making, requires that quality assessments and information systems be in place when designing plans and strategies. It also requires constant monitoring of regional and global agri-food markets to better implement timely measures in achieving desired results. More importantly, this two-fold challenge requires increasing the technical capacities of all national, regional and global institutions responsible for providing food and nutrition security information, and consolidating harmonized information systems to more effectively monitor and analyse the various levels.

10. In this connection, it should be noted that food insecurity monitoring should result in progress towards producing information and evaluating those public programmes and policies better placed to facilitate efforts designed to strengthen food security at the local, national and regional levels.

11. International Cooperation Actions and Plans: The Region's Member Nations have increased their individual capacities to design, implement and evaluate food and nutrition security policies and their corresponding investment plans within the last decade. These capacities are clearly manifested in the many South-South cooperation initiatives that have taken, and continue to take, place. In addition, major fora and strategic processes afford all international cooperation stakeholders (international cooperation agencies, Specialized United Nations Agencies, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations) the opportunity to add value to these initiatives. It is imperative that these actions be implemented in an orderly manner under the auspices of each Government and in keeping with the principles embedded in such official bodies assessing the effectiveness of Development Aid as the Conferences of Paris Accra and Busan (FAO, 2014), and according to the action priorities and guidelines provided by regional integration bodies.

12. Legislation and Regulations: The above-mentioned mechanisms dealing with local, national, regional and global governance should result in the creation of regulatory frameworks for food security and the Right to Food. It is understood, in this connection, that negotiation and standardization of regulations to promote trade integration will need to take place, and that legislative

initiatives in supranational legislative bodies will need to be introduced for adoption and implementation at the national level. In the case of the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO), it is worth noting that the Framework Law on the Right to Food and Food Security and Sovereignty and the Framework Law on School Feeding were adopted in 2012 and 2013, respectively..

Key Bodies and Stakeholders for Improved Governance of Food and Nutrition Security

13. Governance of food and nutrition security can be improved through national, regional and global mechanisms where various stakeholders organize in making or influencing the decision-making process. Because of the multitude of more or less formal fora at each level, mergers often need to take place. Experience has shown that coordination and supplementing of the whole is the best means to improve overall governance in the midst of the often disparate mandates and aspirations.. Governance, however, does not exclusively deal with the capacities of official bodies. As a matter of fact, it is primarily a process in which the capacities of the bodies and institutions of civil society, the private sector and various scientific or technical institutions also contribute to the overall governance goals.. In other words, increasing and improving governance capacity necessarily involves recognizing and training social stakeholders outside the ambit of Governments.. This process, in turn, serves to increase the governance capacity of Government stakeholders as well as those from civil society.

14. Recent years have witnessed the creation of, many bodies at the national level to coordinate food and nutrition security at the executive level. With differing degrees of legal and operational institutionalization, these bodies serve to implement national multi-sectoral policies and strategies. Some bodies have involved civil society, the private sector, academia and various government branches the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. In addition to the effective participation of civil society, the principal challenge for national governance mechanisms is to roll out actions at the local and territorial levels, and decrease sectorial resistance at the political, technical and operational levels (FAO, 2014).

15. At the regional and sub-regional levels, Latin America and the Caribbean possesses a wide political agenda in its intergovernmental integration bodies, as well as its civil society and international cooperation endeavours. They generally seek to implement and influence action and cooperation plans and policies from within their respective roles and mandates. In this context, it is worth mentioning the CELAC Action Plan (and its section on food and nutrition security and eradication of poverty and hunger), approved at its 2nd Summit in Havana in 2014; and the ALBA – TCP and Petrocaribe Summit in Caracas, in December, 2013, which adopted the Action Plan for the Eradication of Hunger and Poverty. Similarly, there are also the Andean Community's Andean Programme for Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty, the MERCOSUR Strategic Plan for Social Action, the CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy, the sectoral Health and Agriculture policies in support of FNS approved by SICA, and the UNASUR 2011-2014 Action Plan also dealing with food security and malnutrition.

16. At the regional level and also worthy of note is the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI), a commitment from the Region's Member Nations and integration bodies to eradicate hunger within the space of a generation with FAO technical support. The Initiative is a global reference point in linking various stakeholders and in acquiring political clout for the Right to Food. It has been supported by all FAO Regional Conferences since its inception and has been designated as the Region's preferred link with the Committee on World Food Security between sessions. The Parliamentary Front Against Hunger, with its regional coordination mechanisms and 14 national chapters promoting legal initiatives and advocacy processes in favour of national and sub-national food security endeavours is another important development.

17. Civil society is another relevant and essential stakeholder in facilitating improved governance of food and nutrition security. Attention has already been drawn to the emerging and important role being played by social movements at the national and local governance levels. They are also strongly involved at the global level in groups of international bodies, such as Vía Campesina and the Global Right to Food Network. This is particularly significant given the fact that civil society and the private sector have been formally included since 2009 through a specific Mechanism in the reformed

Committee on World Food Security.

18. At the global level, decision-making fora include the United Nations General Assembly, the Committee on World Food Security, the FAO Conference and World Food Summits. There are similar fora, such as the G-20 and G-77, as well as the strong presence of aggregate social movements. At the regional level, examples include the Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, comprising the main national and regional rural representatives.

Principles and Critical Functions in Ensuring the Effectiveness of Governance Mechanisms

19. Analysing these mechanisms is complicated because of the sheer number of governance bodies and stakeholders at various levels, and with differing degrees of institutionalization. However, there is a general consensus to identify cross-cutting functions and principles for any governance mechanism to ensure effectiveness while promoting a rights-based approach. The principles are participation, transparency, accountability and equity, and the functions are inter-agency coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

20. Participation: participation has two dimensions: 1), public discussions of political bodies in conjunction with civil society provide additional legitimacy to adopted decisions, and 2) participation in the implementation and evaluation phases makes these stages more effective and sustainable. At the national level, this argument comes into its own in challenges posed by decisions impacting the territorial level and the need for them to be resistant to political and economic cycles. At the regional and global levels, participation can be an advocacy tool used with and by Member Nations, as well as a mean of legitimizing development aims and agendas adopted by relevant bodies.

21. Transparency, Accountability and Equity: the complexity of food and nutrition security calls for a broadening of access to information, in making informed technical decisions (market transparency, indicators on the multiple causes and dimensions of malnutrition) and in maintaining plans and strategies over time (particularly those adopted on the basis of well-defined responsibilities, functions and roles, and subject to political and social control and the principle of non-discrimination). Providing various inclusive communications channels should be a priority for governance in food systems from both grassroots social sectors and movements and decision-making entities..

22. Inter-agency Coordination: ideally, each governance mechanism should consider the need to coordinate a large number of stakeholders and decision-making bodies in achieving comprehensive management and analysis of food and nutrition security. At the national level, the challenges of new national systems to combat hunger are clear if we consider the problems of incomplete decentralization processes and the inertia of public administrations accustomed to pursuing following their own sectorial rationales. However, this principle is also relevant at the regional and international levels, given that it is not possible to make decisions on food and nutrition security on the basis of national agriculture and production authorities alone. Indeed, most regional integration bodies have strategies to combat malnutrition that are being spearheaded by the Ministries for Social Development of their respective Member Nations..

23. Monitoring and Evaluation: the functions of monitoring and evaluation are justified on a technical, ethical and political basis. The technical aspect refers to when the management of food and nutrition security policies and strategies must maximize impact while duly prioritizing resources. One means of achieving this is by strengthening national statistical systems on agri-food information or the public-policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to improve decision-making processes. The ethical dimension relates to the adoption of a rights-based approach that promotes increasing levels of transparency and empowerment to strengthen political and social auditing. The political function aligns senior decision-making levels with specific projects, while at the same time strengthening the legitimacy of effective inter-sectorial strategies that successfully enhance the political system's ability to respond to the population's needs with appropriate governance structures.

Bibliography

- FAO. 2014. *Cooperación Internacional y Políticas Públicas de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional: La experiencia del Programa España-FAO para América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago, Chile.
- FAO. 2013a. *Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2013*, Santiago, Chile.
- FAO. 2013b. *Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook*. Rome.
- FAO. 2012a. *Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2012*, Santiago, Chile.
- FAO. 2012b. *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security*. Rome
- FAO. 2011. *Good Food Security Governance: The Crucial Premise to the Twin-Track Approach. Workshop Report*. Organized by the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 5-6 December 2011, Rome.