



RIGHT TO FOOD

On 16 October 2007, FAO celebrated World Food Day with the theme "The Right to Food". The right to food is the right of every person to have regular access to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable food for an active, healthy life. It is the right to feed oneself in dignity, rather than the right to be fed. With more than 850 million people still deprived of enough food, the right to food is not just economically, morally and politically imperative – it is also a legal obligation.

Since 1996, following the World Food Summit, FAO has been working with governments and communities worldwide to gain recognition for this basic human right.

Severe food insecurity affects at least one-seventh of the world's human population.

Given the persistent high numbers of undernourished people, in June 2002, the "World Food Summit: five years later" decided to develop guidelines to support Members' efforts to realize the right of everyone to adequate food. In 2004, after intensive negotiations, the Right to Food Guidelines were adopted unanimously by FAO members. FAO set up a Right to Food Unit to support member countries in the implementation of the guidelines.

The guidelines are a practical tool to assist countries in their efforts to eradicate hunger. They provide a set of coherent recommendations on, among others, labour, land, water, genetic resources, sustainability, safety nets, education and the international dimension. They also encourage the allocation of budgetary resources to antihunger and poverty programmes, such as those currently being undertaken in Brazil and Mozambique.

By recognizing the right to food, governments have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil this right. In order to achieve the World Food Summit objective and Millennium Development Goal number one of reducing hunger by half by 2015, efforts are needed to give a voice to the hungry and to strengthen governments' capacity to meet their obligations.



"Riches of the forest: fruits, remedies and handicrafts in Latin America"

"The right to food is not a utopia. It can be realized for all. Some countries are on the way to doing this, but everyone should contribute to make this happen," says Barbara Ekwall, Coordinator of the Right to Food Unit.

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La contribución de los productos forestales no madereros al derecho a la alimentación

¿Como reforzar un enfoque basado sobre los derechos humanos?

El derecho a una alimentación adecuada y su aplicación, en línea con las directrices voluntarias en apoyo a la realización progresiva del derecho a una alimentación adecuada, tiene una directa implicación con la necesidad de un manejo adecuado de los bosques, requiriendo un marco legal que integre disposiciones con miras a favorecer los derechos relativos al acceso a los recursos naturales.

Los productos forestales no madereros (PFNM), por ejemplo, ejercen una importante función como proveedores de alimentos (frutas, semillas comestibles, plantas medicinales y miel). Disposiciones de ley deberían mencionar la necesidad de un acceso justo y equitativo a tales

productos por parte de los grupos más necesitados.

Hay también que tomar en cuenta los múltiples factores que contribuyen a mejorar la seguridad alimentaria a través de una reglamentación apropiada, considerando la necesidad que instancias, autoridades pertinentes y mecanismos adecuados hagan valer los derechos de los grupos más vulnerables.

Recientes disposiciones en Honduras y Nicaragua (véase página 56) reglamentan algunos aspectos de los PFNM, cuya contribución para la seguridad alimentaria podría ser aún más relevante si se tuviera en cuenta su potencial.

A veces, la falta de conocimiento de su valor comercial, no atrae el interés en tomar acciones para reforzar un marco legal que evidencie la necesidad de incrementar su uso sostenible y su producción en beneficio de las poblaciones nativas.

Sin embargo, esta tendencia se está revirtiendo tanto en Honduras como en Nicaragua, las leyes forestales vigentes incluyen disposiciones específicas para promover la compensación por bienes y servicios ambientales derivados de un manejo sostenible de los recursos provenientes del bosque como los PFNM. Es primordial que el Pago por Bienes y Servicios Ambientales (PBSA) sea fundamentado en la ley, con el fin de asegurar el derecho de acceso a esos servicios a las poblaciones locales.

En línea con un enfoque basado sobre los derechos humanos, los gobiernos deberían acompañar con acciones concretas estos esfuerzos. A través de mecanismos claros y procesos transparentes se deberían definir responsabilidades y obligaciones derivadas de la aplicación de la ley, en el marco del proceso de descentralización administrativa del sector forestal.

El Comisionado de los Derechos Humanos, asociaciones de la sociedad civil, y ONG podrían ser parte activa de estas iniciativas.

En fin, los PFNM, como bienes ambientales proveedores de alimentos deberían contar con sistemas de valoración adecuados que generen seguridad jurídica un marco conceptual claro y práctico que permita rescatar con eficiencia la utilidad ambiental, social y económica.

(Aportación hecha por Francesca Felicani Robles, Consultora legal, FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Roma 00153, Italia. Correo electrónico: Francesca.felicanirobles@fao.org)

FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

Right to food and FAO forestry activities – the way forward

Incorporating human rights principles into traditional development approaches may supply the “missing element” that 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 meet international poverty reduction goals, while simultaneously recognizing human dignity and the inherent worth of every individual. How is the right to food (RtF) different from usual ways of fighting hunger, poverty and food insecurity? How will this work for FAO? Some points to consider in answering these questions include the following.

- The RtF is a human right.
- For the 156 countries that have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the RtF is a legally binding right.
- Who is responsible for implementing the RtF? How can states achieve the RtF?
- How can people accede, maintain and claim the RtF?
- How does the RtF differ from food sovereignty, food security and other concepts?

In their document “Putting the right into practice – implementing the right to food at the national level”, the Right to Food Unit have selected five areas of action as entry points: i) advocacy and training; ii) information and assessment; iii) legislation and accountability; iv) strategy and coordination; and v) benchmarks and monitoring.

FAO and its Forestry Department are currently exploring the ways and means to create a synergy through their activities in order to support member countries to achieve food security and the right to food.

As a first step, four thematic clusters were selected – based on themes, and geographic and opportunities criteria – to explore and facilitate the integration of the RtF principles into the work of the Forestry Department: i) intersectoral linkages; ii) legal framework; iii) NWFPs; and iv) policy and institutions.

By the end of 2007, specific recommendations on how to go forward in

the next biennium will clearly define forestry options as a means to achieve the full realization of the right to food for all.

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“Riches of the forest: fruits, remedies and handicrafts in Latin America”

Unasylva celebrates its 60th birthday

FAO’s longest-running periodical celebrated its 60th anniversary with a special double issue (*Unasylva* 226/227), reprinting material from every decade of *Unasylva*’s rich history. The selected articles illustrate how “Weaving knowledge into development”, the slogan from the March 2007 session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, characterizes what *Unasylva* has been doing for 60 years. Collectively, these articles document the evolution of forestry and of FAO’s activities in forestry – and some of the earliest articles may surprise readers by anticipating concepts that we thought were new.

The double issue can be downloaded from: www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1222e/a1222e00.htm

FAO IN THE FIELD

Appropriate legislation: key to a thriving NWFP sector in Central Africa

Millions of people in Central Africa, notably women and minorities, depend on a wealth of non-wood forest resources. These resources enhance food security of the poorest part of the population and increase revenues through commercialization. FAO contributes to the development of the NWFP sector in Central Africa through its projects

“Enhancing food security through sustainable use of non-wood forest products in Central Africa” (GCP/RAF/398/GER) and “Mobilization and capacity building of small and medium enterprises in the non-wood forest product value chains in Central Africa” (GCP/RAF/408/EC).

The projects operate within the strategic framework of the *Commission en charge des forêts d’Afrique Centrale* (COMIFAC) and are fully in line with FAO’s priorities for the development of the forests of the Congo Basin. These are i) improving the socio-economic conditions of the poorest people, enhancing food security and reducing poverty; ii) reinforcing subregional cooperation; and iii) strengthening data collection and management.

A key activity of project GCP/RAF/398/GER is the improvement of the legal framework in order to ensure that forestry laws promote the sustainable use of NWFPs in Central Africa. The appropriate inclusion of NWFPs in forestry laws is an important precondition for sustainable forest management, allowing local populations to increase their well-being and develop the largely informal but economically important market chains of NWFPs.

To this effect, an interdisciplinary working group has elaborated a subregional model law that provides countries in the Congo Basin with orientations for the integration of non-wood resources in their respective national forestry laws. Experts and government representatives from the subregion met twice and finalized the text online. It is available for comments on the project’s Web page at www.fao.org/forestry/site/43715/en. Before its submission to the Executive Secretariat of the Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC) in 2008, the draft will be discussed and validated during a subregional workshop in November 2007.

Whereas the use of wood resources can be directed by relatively clear-cut, uniform legislation, the enormous diversity of NWFPs in terms of use and vulnerability (harvesting impact, scale and intensity of use, perspectives of domestication) requires tailored legislation. Parallel to the subregional harmonization through the model law initiative, project GCP/RAF/408/EC pilots a participatory process to develop product and chain-

oriented legislation. This should lead to the elaboration of appropriate decrees of application for the sustainable use of key products.

An inclusive, participatory approach is believed to create the support needed to bridge the gap between the national legal frameworks and notoriously informal markets. Including stakeholders ranging from producers' associations to the governing institutions, it is expected to promote sustainable use, increase the law-enforcing institutions' legitimacy and allow for an alignment of their capacities with their mandates.

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THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR BAMBOO AND RATTAN (INBAR)

The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) is an international organization established by treaty in November 1997, dedicated to improving the social, economic and environmental benefits of bamboo and rattan. INBAR

Over one billion people live in bamboo houses. However, in the absence of recognized bamboo building codes, professional architects cannot legally utilize bamboo as a building material. Insurances and loans are not available for bamboo buildings. The impact of the approval of the Bamboo Building Code developed by INBAR and submitted earlier to the International Standard Organization (ISO) cannot be overestimated. It will boost bamboo building industries worldwide, promote bamboo utilization and lead to safer, environmentally friendly and affordable dwellings, especially in the developing world.

connects a global network of partners from the government, private, and not-for-profit sectors in over 50 countries to define and implement a global agenda for sustainable development through bamboo and rattan.

INBAR's mission is to improve the well-being of producers and users of bamboo and rattan within the context of a sustainable bamboo and rattan resource base by consolidating, coordinating and supporting strategic and adaptive research and development. In their "Decade of Achievements" (1997-2007), INBAR has been active in many countries, covering resource improvement and management; processing and product technology; national and international policy; and human resources development.

To mark its tenth anniversary, INBAR is holding a wide range of different events in late 2007 and early 2008 around the world, from workshops and seminars to festivals and trade fairs. A full listing of INBAR's anniversary events can be found at www.inbar.int/anniversary/main.htm.

INBAR has also recently produced its "Strategy to the year 2015".

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INDIGENOUS ISSUES

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) is a non-profit, politically independent, international membership organization that supports indigenous peoples worldwide in their struggle for self-determination. IWGIA's

RIGHT TO FOOD AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Indigenous peoples are among the world's most vulnerable groups and poorest socio-ethnic populations. They make up a significant percentage of the food insecure, often facing chronic hunger and malnutrition.

The Right to Food Guidelines refer to indigenous communities in the context of access to resources and assets. Access to land and other productive resources (forest, fishing, water, etc.) are of vital importance for indigenous people's right to food. The cultural identity and heritage of indigenous peoples are inseparable from their traditional lands. Indigenous peoples obtain food directly from their lands by hunting, gathering or cultivating; they may also acquire food indirectly by marketing their produce.

States have particular obligations concerning the right to food of indigenous peoples. These include respecting indigenous peoples' traditional way of living, strengthening traditional food systems and protecting subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering. States are also responsible for ensuring the application of general human rights principles to indigenous peoples, both in their food and nutrition security policies and policies that may affect their access to food.

The right to food is an important tool for indigenous peoples to bring about real change in their lives and for the motivation to negotiate power structures. (Source: *Right to food and indigenous peoples*, paper in the "Focus on" series, Right to Food Unit, FAO.)

activities focus on human rights work, documentation and dissemination of information, and project activities in cooperation with indigenous organizations and communities.

The world's indigenous peoples account for more than 350 million individuals, divided into at least 5 000 peoples.

Since its foundation in 1968, IWGIA has followed the indigenous movement and continuously increased its activities and expanded its network with indigenous peoples worldwide. IWGIA supports indigenous peoples' struggle for human rights, self-determination, right to territory, control of land and resources, cultural integrity and the right to development. It collaborates with indigenous peoples' organizations all over the world.

Documentation about indigenous affairs is an essential part of IWGIA's work. IWGIA publishes books, periodicals and a yearbook about indigenous peoples.

IWGIA's work is primarily funded by the Nordic Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the European Union.

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United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture,

the environment, education, health and human rights.

The Seventh Session of UNPFII, with the special theme "Climate change, biocultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges", will take place at the United Nations headquarters, New York from 21 April to 2 May 2009.

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Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The UN General Assembly on Thursday adopted a non-binding declaration upholding the human, land and resources rights of the world's 370 million indigenous people, brushing off opposition from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. The vote in the assembly was 143 in favour and four against. Eleven countries, including the Russian Federation and Colombia, abstained.

The declaration, capping more than 20 years of debate at the United Nations, also recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and sets global human rights standards for them. It states that native peoples have the right "to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties" concluded with states or their successors.

Indigenous peoples say their lands and territories are endangered by threats such as mineral extraction, logging, environmental contamination, privatization and development projects, classification of lands as protected areas or game reserves and use of genetically modified seeds and technology. [Source: Agence France-Presse newswire, 13 September 2007 [in BIO-IPR docserver].]

SECRETARY-GENERAL DECLARES INDIGENOUS RIGHTS DECLARATION A "TRIUMPH"

The Secretary-General of the United Nations warmly welcomes the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a triumph for indigenous peoples around the world. He notes that this marks a historic moment when United Nations Member States and indigenous peoples have reconciled with their painful histories and are resolved to move forward together on the path of human rights, justice and development for all.

The Secretary-General calls on governments and civil society urgently to advance the work of integrating the rights of indigenous peoples into international human rights and development agendas, as well as policies and programmes at all levels, so as to ensure that the vision behind the declaration becomes a reality.

(Source: UN press statement SG/SM/11156 HR/4931, 13 September 2007.) ♣

