

CFS 36: October 11th 2010: Global developments relevant to food security and nutrition

Presentation on the UN System High Level Task Force on Global Food Security and the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA): David Nabarro

1 When describing the international arrangements for improving food security I often **distinguish** four different elements – (a) the countries affected by food insecurity, (b) the investors in countries' efforts to improve food security, (c) the organizations that support both countries and investors (including the UN system, regional **bodies like CAADP, CGIAR** institutions and the like), and (d) the system for governance of international arrangements to assist the affected countries.

2 The UN system High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) was established by the Chief Executives Board (CEB) of the United Nations in April 2008. It was designed to ensure coordinated UN system support for governments and other stakeholders as they responded to the rapid increase in food prices and the impact of this rise on the extent and depth of food insecurity and poverty among many of the world's peoples. With the UN Secretary-General as chair and Jacques Diouf, DG of FAO, as Vice Chair, the HLTF brings together Heads of the United Nations Specialized Agencies, Funds, Programmes, UN Secretariat Departments, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

3 The Task Force's Senior Steering Group brings together working level officers from these bodies to encourage synergy and tackle problems. A small (8 person) HLTF coordination team is based in Rome (IFAD), Geneva and New York. It has four functions – (a) encouraging better coordination of action by HLTF members in support of country and regional food security actions, (b) concerted advocacy for increased investments in comprehensive approaches for food security, (c) better engagement of the UN system with networks of civil society and private sector stakeholders, and (d) measuring, reporting on and accounting for actions undertaken and progress achieved.

4 One of the first tasks of the HLTF in July 2008 has been to develop a comprehensive strategy for responses to the food security crisis. This strategy – the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) – was designed to encourage concerted responses to the food price crisis with actions that respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and contribute to longer-term resilience (the twin track approach).

5 It served as the glue which kept the UN system together on food security issue while encouraging synergized system-wide support for this strategy within countries and HLTF agencies and in engagement with civil society and private sector partners.

6 It has also been of use to governments and development partners as they have planned strategic responses to global food insecurity, seeking more effective means to reduce chronic hunger (and realize the first Millennium Development Goal).

7 The HLTF coordination team engaged in dialogue at all levels, especially in countries and regions facing high levels of food insecurity and under-nutrition, to stimulate and encourage all efforts made by Governments, civil society, donors, private sector to follow this CFA approach.”

8 In 2009 and 2010, the significance of a comprehensive approach to food and nutrition security was more widely understood, given that communities where overall food production had increased still experienced high levels of child undernutrition. The two tracks are still distinct, but they have evolved. There has also been an increasing recognition that viable ecosystems provide the basis for long-term food security. They are increasingly being factored into immediate and longer-term planning. The potential impacts of climate change, including extreme climate events, on agricultural production, and the need for adaptation and mitigation measures, have been given particular attention, and call for robust inter-agency collaboration.

9 In the mean-time, there has been a massive effort to encourage greater investment in food and nutrition security. The case for an increase in funding for comprehensive approaches to food security continues to be made. Governments have increased the share of national budgets being spent on agricultural development and food security. The combination of coordinated policy advice, carefully developed plans, intensive appraisal, sound project management, improved financial control and audit systems has encouraged the mobilization of additional external support from development partners, including development banks, donor agencies and private foundations. This is a remarkable turnaround after two decades in which spending on agriculture and food security had reached an all-time low.

10 As the context changed between 2008 and 2010, there was a growing sense that the CFA would need to be updated to take into account the superposition of economic, climate, environment and food crises and the evolving debates about the relative importance of different drivers for the food crisis and better reflect the importance of some dimensions - particularly the nutrition dimensions of food security, the right to food, women and food security and environmental dimensions of food production – in the approach.

11 Towards the end of 2009, the HLTF asked that the CFA be updated to better reflect ways in which UN System bodies advise the national authorities and numerous other stakeholders engaged in promoting food and nutrition security. This updating has been done by the HLTF agencies with the active involvement of, and constructive comments from, stakeholders from governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), smallholder farmers’ organizations and the private sector.

12 The updating has involved listening to multiple stakeholders on a range of complex issues including sustainable agriculture, access to land and water, nutritional security, trade and environmental sustainability. The HLTF coordination team is grateful to all who participated in the updating and to the Government of Ireland for supporting the process. The HLTF will develop additional materials that facilitate the dissemination of the UCFA and help those concerned to monitor its use in specific situations.

13 The updating process, undertaken between January and September 2010, has confirmed that the CFA's analysis and emphases are as relevant now as they were in 2008 when it was first produced. However, policymakers still face challenges as they seek ways to link agriculture, food security, rural employment, social protection, better nutrition, climate change and humanitarian action. The Updated CFA (UCFA) is particularly designed to aid coordination among HLTF member agencies (ie the UN system) at country level. The HLTF hopes that it will encourage even more efforts for coordinated and synergized action, and the realization of agreed outcomes.

14 Still based on the twin track approach, the UCFA covers a wider range of issues and contains a more detailed treatment of all aspects of food and nutrition security than its predecessor. It prioritizes environmental sustainability, gender equity, the prerequisites for improved nutrition and the needs of those least able to enjoy their right to food. It acknowledges that, while States have the primary role in ensuring food and nutrition security for all, a multiplicity of other actors have vital contributions to make.

15 The UCFA is a guiding strategic document for the HLTF and has not been negotiated by member States. But it is released as a public good seeking to encourage a coordinated engagement by multiple stakeholders and to improve accountability of the international system. We hope it will be of use to the CFS as it develops Strategic Frameworks for its governance work.

16 The HLTF, as a time-limited mechanism to stimulate more coordinated and effective action on all dimensions of food and nutrition security by the UN system, will work in support of the CFA. Some HLTF members and the HLTF coordinator are part of the CFS Advisory group which helps the CFS bureau take its work forward and contribute to the functioning of the CFS as a whole.