

Remarks by Claudia Ringler

In 2015, the Committee on World Food Security released a report on “Water for Food Security and Nutrition”. This report has important messages for this year’s GFFA topic on “How to Feed the World in Times of Pandemics and Climate Change?”

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The 2015 report established, for the first time, the full set of linkages between water, food security and nutrition. The report also focused on the essentiality of water to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food and the linkages between the right to food and to water and sanitation.

It finally stressed the fundamental role of gender equality and women’s empowerment in realizing the role of water for food and nutrition security.

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The report includes 8 recommendations that are listed here together with their linkage to both addressing pandemics and the climate emergency. I cannot go in detail over all eight, but as an example, the first recommendation---to promote sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems for water for food security and nutrition---directly relates to addressing the climate crisis as watershed rehabilitation and reforestation, f.ex. can ensure continued availability of water for drinking and growing food despite more extreme climatic events. The essentiality of retaining natural ecosystems for pandemics has also been shown as zoonotic diseases, such as Covid-19 are caused by increased wildlife human interactions when the natural habitat of that wildlife is destroyed.

Similarly, improving coherence between water and food security and nutrition policies is essential as the climate emergency affects both but differently and being water insecure affects food security and vice versa. We need to work together, also because there are now fewer funds and these should be spent on initiatives that support both.

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Are we done yet?

Maybe yes, as key findings on the role of water for FSN have been established and reaffirmed. The 2017 GFFA communique on agriculture and water-key to feeding the world was supported by agriculture ministers representing all large producers and water users.

Maybe yes, because there have been advances after 2015. What is now UN Nutrition has taken up the topic in a recent paper and has added insights on the importance of environmentally sustainable diets for water’s future. **It is clear that if diets do not consider environmental impacts, we will not escape growing water scarcity. There is new research on how agricultural water management supports nutrition funded by USAID and new** indicators, such as the Household Water Insecurity Experiences Scale that links easily with food insecurity scales to better assess water and food insecurity inter-dependencies and there are new guidelines that help irrigation managers to focus from the start on how to enhance nutrition outcomes when they use precious water resources.

However, overall actions between the water and nutrition (and nutrition and CC) communities remain limited; are seen as too complex; transaction cost intensive; and training at universities and beyond remains largely single-sector and siloed, making it difficult for policymakers to connect.

Thus, food and water security have declined and will continue to worsen, the threat of pandemics is growing, and adverse climate change impacts are accelerating with both having the largest impacts for the poorest.

No serious action to address these challenges is on the horizon and the global community while endorsing the essentiality of water for nutrition has not changed course or actions.

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Summit (1) Ensure access to safe and nutrition foods (2) Shift to sustainable and healthy consumption patterns (3) Boost nature positive production (4) Advance equitable livelihoods and value distribution and (5) Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses.