

FOOD

FILES

ISSUE 02

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Agreements:
unlocking development?

Mitigating the impacts
of Climate Change

Social Movements
and Civil Society
in the fight for
the Right to Food

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Editorial

The first issue of *Food Files* won ActionAid's *Best Publication Award*. It reached over 30 countries spanning Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia. The magazine was presented at key international events including the *World Food Day* in Rome, the *EU-Africa Summit* in Lisbon and the UNCTAD XII in Accra. It also reached the hands of our most important partners, as well as Jacques Diouff (FAO Secretary General), Koffi Annan (ex-UN Secretary General), and officials from important donors such as the European Commission and the Global Donors Platform. We received very positive general feedback and a huge number of new articles for the magazine. *Food Files* is becoming a success and – much to our pleasure – a bigger challenge.

Food Files Issue 2 brings us some of the key discussions surrounding the global crisis caused by soaring food prices, deepening the debate on the phenomenon's causes and solutions with three articles: *Biofuels and Food Security – Questions towards a Critical Debate*, *Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa: Turning Africa into a Repository for Failed Agricultural Technologies and Right to Food and Food Aid: A Marriage in the Making*. We intend to continue our discussion of the global food price crisis in the next issue.

Climate change and ways of mitigation its effects are also discussed in the articles *Agroecological Systems: Helping Mitigate the Effects of Climate Change* and *Social Technologies: Learning from Local Communities*.

The actual and potential negative effects of an international environment of increasing trade liberalization on the progressive realization of the right to food are also presented and analysed in *Rice and Poultry Import Surges: Effects on Food and Livelihood Security in Ghana* and in the cover article *European Partnership Agreements: Unlocking ACP Development or Locking Them into Poverty?*

Positive experiences in the fight for the right to food are presented in *Politics, Legislation and Hunger: Legislative Advances in Combating Malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean*; *African Social Movements and the Fight for Right to Food*; *Can We Have a Bit of that Growth? An Experience of ActionAid Tanzania in the Fight for the Right to Food*; *Challenges for Food Security in Malawi and the Engagement of Civil Society and Building a Community Network for Protecting and Reclaiming Natural Resources*.

Our aim with these articles is to stimulate the critical debate on emerging issues and to present and share experiences of good practices that contribute to realizing the right to food. We hope *Food Files* will inspire you in your daily practice and thinking! We would be glad to hear your opinion and look forward to receiving more comments and suggestions. Please write to us at food.files@actionaid.org.

Francisco Bendrau Sarmento
International Head of the Right to Food Theme / ActionAid

Politics, legislation and hunger

Legislative advances in combating malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean

Since 2003, Latin America and the Caribbean have seen a remarkable development in legal and institutional frameworks designed to ensure the right to be free of hunger and to adequate food for all citizens of the region's countries.

Since 2003, Latin America and the Caribbean have seen a remarkable development in legal and institutional frameworks designed to ensure the right to be free of hunger and to adequate food for all citizens of the region's countries. Though not matching the urgency demanded by society, the issue of the fight against hunger has gradually acquired a stronger presence on Latin America's national and regional public agendas.

Despite the persistence of significant inequalities in the region, Latin America and the Caribbean are going through an extremely positive economic period. According to data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), whereas average annual economic growth in the 1980s was just 0.9%, it rose to 3.3% in the period 1991-2000 and subsequently to 4.1% in the period 2000-2005.² The historical moment provided by this bonanza in public revenue and the political will for establishing the Right to Food presents solid foundations for reducing malnutrition and eliminating the scourge of hunger.

Nonetheless, in Latin American and the Caribbean 52.4 million people, or 10% of the population, still lack adequate access to food. Although the region is moving towards fulfilling the first Millennium Development Goal for 2015 (reduce hunger), the commitment made by all the region's countries during the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996 to half the number of hungry people is still some distance away: if the current trends in the reduction in subnutrition and population growth continue to 2015, the number of undernourished people in Latin America and the Caribbean can be expected to be around 41 million, while the target set at the WFS was 30 million.³

THE RETURN OF HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION TO THE REGION'S SOCIAL AGENDAS

Various Latin American and Caribbean governments have reaffirmed their support towards fighting hunger in the region over the last few months. The list includes Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Paraguay and Uruguay, countries whose leaders have confirmed that the issue is a priority for their governments. As FAO has argued for many years, the first commitment needed to eliminate hunger is political. Governments have become increasingly aware of this fact over the last few years. On assuming office in Barbados, the Prime Minister Thompson highlighted the promotion of food security as a priority. The same commitment was made by the President of

LAWS AGAINST HUNGER IN LATIN AMERICA

Argentina:

Law creating the National Nutrition and Food Program,
17 January 2003.⁹

Guatemala:

National Nutrition and Food Security System Law, 6 April 2005.¹⁰

Ecuador:

Nutrition and Food Security Law,
27 April 2006.¹¹

Brazil:

Law creating the National Nutrition and Food Security System,
15 September 2006.¹²



Guatemala, Álvaro Colom, in his inauguration ceremony. This confirmation that fighting hunger is now a priority in this Central American country signals the transformation of a government policy into a State policy.

In December 2007, the joint communiqué of the presidents of the Member States of MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) released at the end of the 34th Council Meeting, also attended by the presidents of Bolivia and Chile, reiterates the commitment of the countries to eliminating hunger and fighting poverty, and their support for the Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative (HFLAC, or ALCOSH in its Spanish acronym).⁴ The fight against hunger was also highlighted in the Declaration of Peace signed during the visit of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to his Bolivian counterpart, Evo Morales.

THE HUNGER FREE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN INITIATIVE BECOMES PART OF THE AGENDA

Brazil and Guatemala have played an important role in promoting the fight against hunger as a political priority at regional level. These measures were made concrete with the Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean initiative (HFLAC),⁵ a project later backed by other countries and whose technical office is run by the regional office of the FAO with financial support from Spain. This office coordinates the efforts to ensure that ours is the first developing region to be free of hunger.

As well as the explicit support of the Heads of State of some countries towards achieving a hunger free Latin America (i.e. Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay), the idea that the region can rid itself once and for all of a scourge that seems to have held it back since the middle ages has also been expressed in political declarations during regional meetings. In the final declaration to the 16th Ibero-American Summit in Uruguay,⁶ which took place in October 2006, all the Heads of State and Government showed their specific support for the ALCOSH initiative (point 5 of the Declaration).

Other proofs of political support took place in Guatemala during the 5th Regional Forum for Nutrition and Food Security, organized by the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and the Central American Social Integration Secretariat (SISCA), where express mention was once again made of the HFLAC initiative. Finally, in the final declaration to the 3rd Ibero-American Parliamentary Forum,⁸ held in Valparaíso on 11-12 November 2007, there was an explicit reference in point 3 to “urging Ibero-American parliaments to enable the approval of specific laws on food security, with the aim of assisting national governments in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty.”

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, LEADING THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO FOOD

From 21st to 24th January 2008, a Regional Workshop was held in Managua on Food Rights Legislation, which served to highlight the robust health enjoyed by the campaigns to ensure the right to food in many of the region’s countries.⁷ The richness of the discussions provided valuable contributions to improving the Guide and allowed comparison and discussion of the wide range of legal processes concerning this right in the region. The workshop amply demonstrated that Latin America is currently the most advanced region in terms of laws, institutions and public awareness of the right to food. The fact that the Latin American public is widely aware of the problems caused by hunger and demands the implementation of solutions and the respect for human rights has consequences that extend beyond its area – providing valuable lessons for other regions such as Asia and Africa.

GOOD PROSPECTS FOR FOOD SECURITY LAWS

The objective of a national food policy within a human rights framework is to guarantee the right of all citizens of the country to food of sufficient quantity and quality. One of the forms of manifesting this right in some countries is through the promulgation of Nutrition and Food Security Laws, which establish the regulatory framework for the national Nutrition and Food Security (NFS) system, and assigns a minimum budget to running this system.

Argentina was the first country in the region to introduce a food security law, a somewhat paradoxical fact given that it is not one of the countries with the highest levels of hunger and it has also exported meat and staple grains on the world market. Currently there are four countries with Food Security Laws (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Guatemala), and nine where bills for such laws are currently passing through parliament (Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia).¹³ This legislative endeavour to ensure the right to be free of hunger and have adequate food is without parallel in other regions of the world.

During 2007, the Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean initiative promoted a variety of activities related to the Right to Food, among which we can mention all the support given to the region’s countries and representatives of FAO towards organizing the activities surrounding World Food Day 2007, whose key theme was the Right to Food. As part of this context, studies on “Advances and challenges in implementing

the Right to Food” were commissioned from each of the seven priority countries; these reports were produced by seven national NGOs with support from four international NGOs that campaign in favour of the right to food (ActionAid, FIAN International, Action Against Hunger and Prosalus). These reports can be found on the HFLAC initiative’s website:

<http://www.rlc.fao.org/iniciativa/infda.htm>

STRENGTHS OF THE FOOD SECURITY LAWS

The laws on food security and the right to food reflect the interest of the States in gradually achieving this right, since the development of legal frameworks already appears in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines.¹⁴ More recently, the final document of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR was sent to the UN General Assembly for final approval. This protocol will allow claims relating to the violation of any of these rights to be presented to international courts, a possibility of extreme importance to the right to food.

The NFS laws approved so far represent a body of important advances capable of making the right to food a reality for the region’s most disadvantaged citizens. Among the highlighted aspects we can mention that:

- a.** All the laws incorporate a reference to the right to food, as a legal principle guiding the nature of the law. However, divergences exist in the adopted definitions, since use is rarely made of the definitions of food security, the right to food and food sovereignty adopted in international treaties and the documents signed by the countries themselves.
- b.** All the laws create a national system of food security,¹⁵ designed to coordinate the actions of various ministries with the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition. A National Food Security Council is created as the guiding body for the system, linked to the highest level (Presidency or Vice-Presidency) and formed by ministers and civil society representatives. In the Brazilian case, this Council has a consultative nature, while in Guatemala and Ecuador the body can make binding decisions. It is recommended that the presidency of this body is assumed by the President or Vice-President, to ensure it is connected to the highest level, and that its members are Ministers or Deputy Ministers.
- c.** All the laws prioritize vulnerable groups, in full compliance with one of the dimensions of the right (to be free of hunger), though only Argentina and Brazil mention the safety of these groups, one of the universal aspects of the right relating to adequate food.

- d.** Drafting of all four laws involved a participative process and the participation of organized civil society in its decision-making structures is emphasized, especially in Brazil where CONSEA (the consultative body) is composed mostly of civil society. In Guatemala and Ecuador, civil society and the private sector are both represented in the National Food Security Council, the guiding and decision-making body on the theme.

- e.** Some laws (Guatemala and Ecuador) expressly mention mechanisms for monitoring and analyzing food security; however none of them incorporates preventative activities or immediate reparation in the case of experiencing hunger.

CHALLENGES REMAINING TO BE INCORPORATED IN THE PROPOSED LAWS UNDER DEBATE

As mentioned previously, new law bills on food security and the right to food are now being debated, reviewed and passing through may of the region’s parliaments for final approval. In these proposals, we recommend taking into account certain aspects that appear to expose weaknesses in the four laws already approved and which may be improved in the projects for future laws.

- a.** The laws do not merely involve establishing procedures and mechanisms for claiming violations of the right to food. Judicial, quasi-judicial and administrative bodies have to be designated to which claims and appeals relating to the violation of food rights can be presented. Penalties also have to be set down in the penal code.
- b.** The laws should incorporate a budget allocation in accordance with the magnitude of the problem, distinguishing between the operational budget needed to run the national food security system, and the budget for implementing programs on the ground to fight malnutrition. Moreover, progressive expenditure – and the avoidance of non-regressive expenditure – is not guaranteed by any of the laws, despite the guidelines of the ICESCR and the obligation for progressive but constant implementation. Guatemala’s law sets a minimum budget, while Ecuador’s law establishes a fund to fight hunger (which has never been put into operation), though neither mention progressive social expenditure to guarantee the right to food.
- c.** Strategic litigation and the development of jurisprudence, given that very few cases involving violation of this right have come to court.¹⁶ In fact, there are only six documented cases of the use of the right to food as a juridical argument that have been successfully tried. Some of these cases only use the right to food obliquely rather than as a central theme of the legal argument. Much more strategic litigation is required from lawyers

associations and NGOs defending human rights for jurisprudence to be created. Recently another interesting case appeared in Argentina (September 2007),¹⁷ where the Supreme Court ruled as a cautionary measure that the national State and the Government of Chaco Province should provide food and drinking water to the province's indigenous Toba communities, as well as an adequate means of transportation and communication to each of the health posts, since they have the main responsibility for effectively assuring the rights of native peoples. This resolution was promoted by a legal action filed by the National Ombudsman Office to modify the deplorable living conditions of these indigenous groups, who regularly appear in the newspapers because of the deaths of their children from severe malnutrition.

IN CONCLUSION

It is strikingly evident for everyone the neoliberal market model is facing a crisis at global level, a model that advocates sacrificing the regulatory role of the State in favour of a free world market with minimum rules that benefit the large multinationals and the first world countries. This system is showing unequivocal signs of weakness worldwide. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean the crisis will have less of an impact than other regions, since the region produces surplus amounts of food. Nonetheless all of us hope that these indications of a food crisis have raised the political profile of the right to food, meaning that it ceases to be a minor economic and social right, little developed and known, and becomes the pillar of the food policies currently being developed in the region.

We have observed that the region is pushing through advances that reach all its citizens and ensure the hungry obtain the right to food. This progress can be identified in the majority of the countries where it is promoted by Governments, civil society and legislative assemblies. Towards this end, the food security laws are an important step in consolidating the fight against hunger as a state policy, but they are not the end of the process, merely one more step forward. Working together (south-south cooperation) is a key aspect of this goal. And since there are more than 12 countries involved in these processes, we believe it is extremely important to cultivate an exchange of experiences between them concerning the promotion of the right to food.

Finally, we should stress the role being played by Latin American civil society in this process of consolidating the right to be free of hunger. The hungry do not know this right, and thus will never claim it. They need support to discover this right and then turn this

complaint into a formal denunciation of a rights violation. This is where civil society organizations from many countries are playing a notable role by amply disseminating the foundations of this right, producing national reports on the advances in the region's countries and taking the first cases of denunciations against hunger to the courts. The right to hunger needs more jurisprudence and greater recognition. In this sense, civil society, NGOs, producer associations, universities, churches and other organized groups are keys to pushing forward the idea that "eating is a right."

1 This document solely reflects the opinions and ideas of the author and does not represent in any form the official stance of FAO in relation to the topics contained in the text. For this work, the author thanks the help of Armando Aravena and Andrés Pascoe.

2 FAO/CEPAL/PMA (2007). *Hunger and social cohesion: how to reverse the relation between inequity and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean*. FAO, Santiago (in Spanish). www.rlc.fao.org/iniciativa/librocs.htm

3 FAO (2006). *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome.

4 www.mercosur.coop/recm/IMG/pdf/comunicado_conjunto_mercosur.pdf

5 The ALCOSH Initiative was launched by President Lula of Brazil and President Berger of Guatemala in September 2005 in Guatemala, and seeks to sensitize decision-makers, inform Government administrators and pass on information to the wider public concerning hunger in the region, with the aim of placing the issue on the political agendas of the countries and the region as a whole. The initiative has received political backing from all the region's presidents, both individually and in regional declarations. www.rlc.fao.org/iniciativa

6 www.oei.es/xvicumbredec.htm

7 The event was supported by the *Right to Food Unit* of FAO Rome (www.fao.org/righttofood) and the *Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative* (www.rlc.fao.org/iniciativa), as part of their effort to help implement the Right to Food in all the region's countries.

8 www.foro-chile.cl/prontus_foroiberoa/site/artic/20070913/asocfile/iii_foro_declaracion_de_valparaiso_2007.pdf

9 ARGENTINA, *National Nutrition and Food Program Law*, January 2003. www.desarrollosocial.gov.ar/Planes/PA/normativa/ley25724.asp

10 GUATEMALA, *National Nutrition and Food Security System Law*, April 2005.

www.congreso.gob.gt/archivos/decretos/2005/gtdcx32-2005.pdf

11 ECUADOR, *Nutrition and Food Security Law*, April 2006.

<http://apps.congreso.gov.ec/sil/documentos/autenticos/22-631.pdf>

12 BRAZIL, *Law No. 11.346 Law Creating the National Nutrition and Food Security System*, September 2006.

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2004-2006/2006/Lei/L11346.htm

13 COSTA RICA, *Framework law for nutrition and food security and sovereignty* (proposal). www.fao.or.cr/docs/propuesta_ley_marco_sam.pdf

NICARAGUA, *Nutrition and food sovereignty and security law* (proposal).

<http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/sileg/iniciativas.nsf/01c00d5076037b5b062572d00072bee8/caf29f2bb00d13dd06256886005796dc?opendocument&tableborder=3.1#3>

MEXICO, *Law for implementing nutrition and agrifood sovereignty and security* (proposal).

<http://desarrollo.diputados.gob.mx/camara/content/view/full/7575>

PERU, *Law for the right to adequate food* (proposal). [http://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/tradocestproc/tradoc_condoc_2006.nsf/porley/01390/\\$file/01390.pdf](http://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/tradocestproc/tradoc_condoc_2006.nsf/porley/01390/$file/01390.pdf)

14 The development of NFS laws is included in the *Voluntary Guidelines*, which were ratified by 185 countries in 2004. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are six countries that have not ratified ICESCR (Antigua and Barbados, Belize, Bahamas, Haiti Saint Kitts and Nevis and Santa Lucia), though all of them have ratified the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and approved the *Voluntary Guidelines* as members of FAO. Their commitment is more moral than contractual.

15 Argentina's law refers more to the creation of national food security program, and less to the coordination of national system of institutions, responsibilities, objectives and funds.

16 On the website of the *International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* there are just six cases of jurisprudence related to the right to food: two in Paraguay, two in India, one in Nigeria and one in Switzerland. As an argument, the Paraguay cases use instead the right to land and to a dignified life.

www.escr-net.org/caselaw/caselaw_results.htm?attribLang_id=13441

17 As an example of strategic litigation, we can mention the work of the *Argentinean Centre for Legal and Social Studies* (www.cels.org.ar), which kindly provided us with the recent sentence of the Supreme Court.

European Partnership Agreements

Unlocking ACP development or locking them into poverty?



Mariano Iossa / ActionAid

More than 30 years of preferential access to the European market has failed to bear the expected fruits and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are still struggling to integrate into the global economy

INTRODUCTION

More than 30 years of preferential access to the European market has failed to bear the expected fruits and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are still struggling to integrate into the global economy. The share of ACP trade to the European Union (EU) has fallen from 6.7% in 1976 to 2.9% in 2003. The economy of several of these countries, particularly in Africa, is still heavily dependent on trade in a few agricultural commodities – such as coffee, cocoa or tobacco – and on international aid.¹

In Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda, the export share of a single commodity exceeds 50 percent of total merchandise exports. In 2005, aid represented 46.8% of GNI in Burundi, 36.8% in Congo and 54.1% in Liberia, to name just a few.

This, together with the issue of compatibility with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules (box on EPAs and WTO compatibility), have been the two main reasons behind the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). While the need for a deep change in the trade and economic relations between the EU and ACPs is widely shared among all parties, the direction of such change has been the object of fierce contentions.

In a nutshell, the European Commission (EC) focuses on the fact that preferences didn't contribute to economic diversification – hence the rationale for their discontinuation; the ACP stresses the fact that preferences were conceived in a way that relegated ACPs to the role of exporters of tropical commodities and raw materials – hence the need to maintain them but in a different package.

Negotiations started in 2002 on the basis of the principles set in the Cotonou Agreement (Box on the Cotonou Agreement), which engaged the parties to replace the old trade arrangements based on unilateral preferences with new WTO-compatible ones, but not less favourable than the existing ones.



Mariano Iossa / ActionAid



The main objective of these new agreements was to favour the sustainable development of ACP countries and their gradual integration into the global economy through regional integration. Negotiations were planned to be completed by the end of 2007, in time for the expiry of the WTO waiver. Joining the circle of all these commitments was going to be a challenging job. After an initial all-ACP phase, negotiations began between the EC and six ACP negotiating regions.

The recipe proposed by the EU is a reciprocal free trade agreement combined with an adjustment programme and an aid-for-trade package. Such free trade agreements, according to the EC, would need to include a wide range of sectors – liberalization of goods and services, as well as new rules on investment, competition and public procurement in order to create the necessary business environment to attract needed investments and avoid capital flight, stimulate regional policy integration and ultimately favour intra-regional trade. This would result in the diversification of economies and promote a virtuous economic circle.

The rhetoric of the EC concerning this ambitious project can be quite attractive. Looking more closely, however, the EC's recipe is unlikely to turn out fool-proof positive results. Such free trade deals would put very unequal partners into direct competition. Opening up ACP economies would mean threatening the agricultural productive base and infant industry in the

COTONOU AGREEMENT

The Cotonou Agreement is a treaty between the European Union (EU) and the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. It was signed in June 2000 and entered into force in 2002 to replace the Lomé Conventions, which had been the basis for ACP-EU development cooperation since 1975. The Cotonou Agreement was signed for twenty years and provides for a revision clause to adapt it every five years.

The Cotonou Agreement is aimed at reducing and eventually eradicating poverty while contributing to sustainable development and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy. Following the first revision in 2005, it also includes the fight against impunity and the promotion of criminal justice through the International Criminal Court.

The agreement is based on five interdependent pillars: an enhanced political dimension, increased participation, a more strategic approach to cooperation focusing on poverty reduction, new economic and trade partnerships and improved financial cooperation.

ACPs with a direct impact on the local population's right to food, while simultaneously providing European industries with unprecedented access to ACP natural resources and further eroding the policy space of ACP governments.

Above all, the real implications of these agreements have been largely overlooked. Trade does not occur separately from the human rights framework. The right to food is a human right and a binding obligation well-established under international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It seeks to ensure that all people can feed themselves with dignity. By signing EPAs, ACP governments will be faced with the challenge of failing to meet their obligations on the right to food.

The following are just a few of the threats posed by the EC's free trade EPAs:

Liberalisation of trade in goods: unfair competition

Opening up the ACP markets will put family farmers and small national industries in direct competition with subsidised farming products as well as highly competitive industrial goods and services from Europe. Agricultural products in Europe enjoy direct or indirect subsidies – in the region of 90 billion Euros a year – that make them particularly cheap and favour their overproduction and dumping on third world markets.

The cases of dumping of chicken in The Gambia, tomatoes in Ghana and beef in West Africa (box on Trade liberalisation and food dumping in West Africa) tell us that dumping of cheap agricultural products results in the displacement of local producers and the closure of local businesses, in some cases forcing farmers to abandon their land and crops. EPAs will exacerbate the unfair competition posed by European products and national governments will no longer be able to waive tariff measures to protect local producers. 'Sensitive product' lists for protection in the reciprocal trade deals are not necessarily adequate as they are limited in scope and do not allow for future 'sensitive' products to be added, effectively limiting future diversification.

Beyond WTO compatibility requirements

The EU's demands for liberalisation extend well beyond the requirements of WTO compatibility to include services and rules on investments, competition and public procurement. According to the European Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson, clear and transparent rules represent the 'bread and butter' of a healthy economy that can attract investment and improve services through competition between different operators.

Its detractors argue that the EC is actually driven by the interests of powerful European corporate lobbies, seeking new markets in competitive sectors while maintaining preferential access to ACPs over new global players such as China. These demands also entail risks for basic human rights. The experience of water privatisation in South Africa shows that the profit-based logic is likely to reduce access to water and potentially other basic services for many poor communities (box on water services privatisation in South Africa).

ACP countries should maintain the right to protect vulnerable population groups and sectors and safeguard the policy space to modulate policies over time according to their evolving economic and political priorities. Before exposing a local industry to international competition, it sometimes needs to be allowed to develop in a protected and supported environment. In other cases, if the sector is vulnerable and/or strategic, a country must be able to maintain its protection over the longer term, just as Europe does with farming and the film industry.

Regional integration

One of the agreed goals of EPAs is to strengthen and foster existing ACP regional integration processes by stimulating the formulation of regional economic/trade

TRADE LIBERALISATION AND FOOD DUMPING IN AFRICA

Beef dumping in West Africa and South Africa

In the 1980's EU beef exports to coastal West Africa increased sevenfold to reach 54,000 tons in 1991. EU export support for this production, mostly low grade meat, was 2 ECU per kilo, four times the reported value of the beef itself, while the EU provided 100 million ECU to European companies to export beef to West Africa valued at 27 million ECU. The beef was sold at one to two-thirds below the price of local fresh beef. For decades livestock producers in Sahelian countries had provided live cattle for beef consumption in coastal West Africa. This pattern changed with the introduction of EU beef and regional cattle trade dropped by 30% from the early part of the decade.

At about the same time, cheap EU beef also made inroads into the South African markets. In 1993 the South African government replaced a quantitative restriction on beef imports with a tariff. EU beef exporters made use of export refunds to make EU beef cheaper and increase the volume exported to South Africa. Between 1993 and 1996 low quality frozen meat increased from 6,600 tonnes to nearly 46,000 tonnes. With 70% of supplies going to the canned meat sector, EU beef exporters become dominant in the market with a negative impact on suppliers from Namibia, mainly the poorest sections of the population traditionally involved in livestock raising.

Tomato dumping in Ghana

Processing tomatoes in Ghana started in the 1960s when three plants were set up at strategic points across the nation. But following trade liberalisation in the early 1980s, imports of subsidised and cheap tomato paste from the EU jumped six-fold between 1993 and 2003. Ghana imported 27,000 tonnes of paste for 25 million Euros in 2003.

The trade reforms were reportedly rolled out under an adjustment programme on the advice of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

A direct result of the liberalisation was that two of the tomato processing factories had to shut down, while the third is reported to be working at only 10 per cent of its capacity.

In: MARK CURTIS, *Trade Invaders*, ActionAid 2005; and MICHAEL HALDERMAN and MICHAEL NELSON, EU CAP, *the Doha Round and developing countries*, 2004.

policies, building better infrastructures and making bureaucracy lighter.

Yet, the reality of the EPA negotiations is in contradiction with such objectives. Intra-regional integration is not necessarily compatible with the integration of these regions with Europe. Integration with Europe will actually lead ACP countries to lose regional markets to Europe. The Economic Commission for Africa estimates that Ghana could lose 23 million US dollars of intra-regional trade to Europe.

In addition, the six ACP negotiating configurations only partly coincide with existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs), in some cases creating new regional groups inconsistent with the existing ones. Exacerbating the problems already being caused by these inconsistencies, in late 2007 the EC pushed individual countries and groupings different from the initial

EPAS AND WTO COMPATIBILITY

One of the key principles of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment, according to which countries should not discriminate between their trading partners. This means that a country cannot grant special market access conditions to a WTO member without granting it to all the others.

Preferential treatment was a key principle behind the EU policy under the successive Lomé Conventions. Trade preferences under the Cotonou Agreement allowed ACP countries access to the EU market at zero or reduced tariffs without requiring reciprocity. These preferences were in breach of the MFN principle and were therefore dependent on a waiver being granted by WTO members.

Two broad exceptions to the principle of the MFN: Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and the Enabling Clause. Art. 24 of the WTO regulates the possibility of two countries or country groupings to grant special market access provided it is reciprocal, covers 'substantially all trade' and takes place over a reasonable period of time. Such FTAs are limited to trade in goods and define special market conditions, which do not need to be granted to other WTO members. The Enabling Clause, introduced in 1979, allows non-reciprocal tariff preferences to be granted by developed countries to discriminate in favour of developing countries (but does not allow for discrimination between groups of developing countries).

With the EPAs, the EU seeks to conclude trade agreements that will be WTO-compatible by forming reciprocal free trade areas.

negotiating configurations to enter into bi-lateral interim agreements. Those countries judging that they were not in a position to sign an interim EPA (IEPA) were threatened with discontinuation of the Cotonou preferences and a reversion to the less generous EU Generalized System of Preferences, an eventuality likely to engender trade disruption.

Another 'punitive measure' used by the EC has been to prevent countries that signed an IEPA from benefiting from the new trade arrangement for processed products when the materials for such products are sourced from ACP countries that failed to sign (rule of origin). This has had a very negative impact on the negotiating and political dynamics within these regions.

THE COST OF ADJUSTMENT TO EPAS AND LOSS OF CUSTOM REVENUES

Most ACP governments depend heavily on customs revenue to fund national policies. Dismantling custom tariffs basically means loss of government revenue.

It has been estimated that Zambia might lose 15.8 million US dollars a year in government revenues, the equivalent of its annual spending on HIV/AIDS. The government of Burundi stands to lose about 7.6 million Euros in revenue – one less dollar per person that could potentially be spent on education or healthcare.²

While the EU is asking ACPs to dismantle tariffs over a relatively short period of time, there is no clear adjustment plan for the creation of alternative sources of government income before phasing out the old system.

Furthermore, the scope of this trade liberalisation project is not matched by a clear adjustment programme and equally ambitious adjustment funds. Adjustments to EPAs would entail a broad structural transformation of the ACP economies, the total cost of which has been estimated by the Commonwealth Secretariat to be around 9 billion Euros. This stands against a meagre 2 billion Euros of aid for trade allocated by the EU (50% of which will go to the ACPs and only 700 million of which involves new commitments). And perhaps most importantly, liberalisation steps are not made conditional on the achievement of key adjustment milestones.

STATE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

As of today, less than half of the ACPs have signed an IEPA. Essentially only those countries that risked trade disruption were they not to sign have done so. None of the agreements have been notified to the WTO and debate is still raging fiercely on the nature of these agreements with difficult implications for the countries that have yet to sign.

The EC considers the interim agreements a building block for full EPAs, while ACPs want to keep the doors open for renegotiation. Complaints made by African Heads of State at the Lisbon Summit on excessive pressure from the EC prompted the latter's President, Manuel Barroso, to assure the African governments that the unsolved issues in the IEPAs would be revisited during 2008. Feelings that interim agreements were signed in haste and under a great deal of pressure are widely shared: Louis Straker, a Member of Parliament from St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean recently said at the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Slovenia: "If we had not signed up to the EPAs, we would have been subjected to much higher tariffs. We had no choice." The promise to review IEPAs has been quickly downplayed by European Trade Commissioner Mandelson, "I don't believe Barroso gave such a commitment to re-negotiate," he said in January. At the last EU-SADC meeting in Botswana a senior EC official also said: "We are not going to re-open what has already been negotiated."

The latest information received from meetings with EU officials indicates that the contentious issues in the IEPAs could be revised, but only within the context of a full EPA. Also, the EC would like more reluctant countries that have not yet signed to join the interim deals. However, several countries that have not signed have strong reservations concerning the contents of these agreements. At the recent EU-SADC meeting in Botswana, South Africa said that the text agreed by neighbouring countries contains "clauses not in our interest," referring to a Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause obliging them to grant the EU any special treatment granted in future trade deals with other blocks.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past five years the European Commission has pushed the negotiations forward at a rapid pace, much faster than the ACPs could handle, and has ignored the fact that these negotiations diverged from the initial spirit of the Cotonou Agreement, overlooking warnings from international institutions such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank, and disregarding the requests of its ACP 'partners.'

In so doing, the EC has gradually disenfranchised vast groups: it is clear that the EPA negotiations have been a public relations 'disaster' and a 'huge communications failure' – as one senior EC official put it – with long term implications for the future EU-ACP relation.

But is it true that there is no alternative and that a free trade agreement is the only option for WTO com-

WATER SERVICES PRIVATISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Water privatisation schemes rolled out in three South African townships in the mid-90s, involving multinationals Biwater and Suez, have proven disastrous for poor communities and their right to access water supplies.

After Biwater installed new water meters in 2001 in two townships in Mpumalanga, household water bills rose dramatically from a previous flat rate of 7 Rand (or 0.60 Euro) to 300 Rand a month (or 26.30 Euro) – a rise of 4.185%. Many poor residents soon found themselves in arrears and their supplies were disconnected.

As a result of privatisation of local water services in Soweto in 2001 by a subsidiary of French water company Suez, prepaid water meters – costing up to 1000 Rand (or 87.70 Euros) – were installed and tariffs were charged of up to 272 Rand (or 23.86 Euro) for 50 extra kilolitres of water per month. People had to use less water because they could not afford to pay these bills.

As prices rose, many poor people were forced to resort to self-provision from untreated sources, such as wells and rivers, exposing themselves to water-borne diseases. Overall, about 500,000 people have had water supplies cut off for non-payment and more suffer daily indignities and threats to their health.

In: ALEX WIJERATNA, *Down the plughole*, October 2005, ActionAid.

patibility? And is it right that development goals, respect for human rights and good governance come a distant second to placating the demands of the free trade paradigm?

International civil society denounces the free trade orthodoxy, reminds the European executive of the primacy of human rights and shows possible alternatives that are less demanding for the ACPs and that can allow them to focus on intra-regional policy and economic integration. But the EC does not seem to appreciate the 'intrusion' of civil society and the Commissioner has spoken of a smear campaign conducted by international NGOs.

At the end of the day, it is just a question of political will: what is at stake goes beyond trade relations to encompass the broader political and historical ties between Europe and Africa.

¹ See <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/57495/sgreport.pdf> and http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/table6_11.pdf. foodsecurity/Files/NumberUndernourishment_en.xls

² The real costs and benefits of EPAs, Christian Aid, Traidcraft and Tearfund, April 2007

Mariano Iossa / ActionAid



ACP INITIAL NEGOTIATING CONFIGURATIONS AND GROUPS SIGNING EPAS BY THE END OF 2007

Negotiating configurations in 2002	Who has signed (as of March 2008)	What?
<p>Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) + Mauritania: Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger.</p>	<p>Ivory Coast (Dec. 7) and Ghana (Dec. 13).</p>	<p>Initialed a separate 'stepping stone' EPA</p>
<p>Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA): Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius.</p>	<p>East African Community (EAC): Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi (Nov. 27). Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Nov. 28), Mauritius (Dec. 4); Comoros and Madagascar (Dec. 11).</p>	<p>Initialed an Interim EPA Initialed separate Interim EPAs</p>
<p>Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) + Sao Tome. Chad, Cameroun, Central African Republic, DRC, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe.</p>	<p>Cameroun (Dec 17).</p>	<p>Initialed separate Interim EPAs</p>
<p>Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Lesotho, Swaziland. South African joined the negotiations in Feb. 2007.</p>	<p>Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique (Nov. 23); Namibia (Dec. 12).</p>	<p>Initialed a single Interim EPA with the group of countries</p>
<p>Pacific region: Federated State of Micronesia, Cook Island, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Is., Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua N. G., Samoa, Solomon Is., Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.</p>	<p>Papua New Guinea and Fiji (Dec. 23).</p>	<p>Initialed a joint Interim EPA</p>
<p>CARIFORUM (Caribbean Forum) Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Rep., Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent, St. Ch. & Nevis, Surinam, Trinidad & Tobago.</p>	<p>CARIFORUM (Dec 16)</p>	<p>Initialed a full EPA with the group of countries</p>

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Agroecological Systems

Helping mitigate the effects of climate change



André Telles/ActionAid/ Brasil

family farmers in Vereda Funda, state of Minas Gerais in Brazil, cultivate coffee in agroecological systems

North America and Europe are responsible for the production of roughly 70% all carbon dioxide emissions

Climatic changes pose a threat to the developing world and may push back the few advances made over the last few decades in the fight against hunger and inequality. Recently both the IPCC¹ and Stern² reports have indicated that climate changes are the result of human action, and that their consequences will be felt in particular by developing and developed countries.

The consensus is that these alterations are related to the growth in emissions of various greenhouse gases. North America and Europe are responsible for the production of roughly 70% all carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, the gas which most contributes to global warming. All the developing countries combined account for less than ¼ of these emissions.

An extremely perverse aspect of this scenario is that the countries likely to be the most affected will be precisely those that have contributed least to global warming and that have fewer conditions to take action to reduce the effects of climate change.

From the geographical point of view, developing regions are at a disadvantage, since they are naturally warmer than developed regions and frequently affected by their high variability in climatic conditions. In addition, developing countries – especially the poorest – are dependent on farming, one of the economic sectors most vulnerable to climate changes. These are the countries that will suffer most from the drastic reduction in economic activities, the amplification of processes of desertification, frequent harvest losses, and the hunger and migration provoked by water and food shortages.

In order to mitigate the impacts of climate changes, especially those capable of affecting the most vulnerable and poorest populations, as well as achieving an immediate reduction in gas emissions, massive investments need to be made in public policies aimed towards the construction of alternative development models and agricultural production systems, which are more resistant and resilient than conventional models.

Today growing numbers of social movements and civil society organizations across various regions of the planet see Agroecology as the tool capable of building of this new model.

Examples include the systems of capturing, storing and distributing drinking water, the amplification and decentralization of food stocks, the implantation of landslide and flood control mechanisms, and so on. Measures urgently need to be introduced that enable poor populations to adapt to the new climatic situation in an autonomous, sovereign and sustainable form.

AGROECOLOGY: BUILDING MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Agroecology has emerged as a scientific and strategic approach for supporting the transition from conventional farming to farming pursued on ecological bases through the application of ecological concepts and principles in the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems ³(Gliessman 2001). This involves a multidisciplinary methodology, focused on confronting the current environmental and social crisis, which proposes managing natural resources in an integrated and participative form. Aiming to strengthen family farming in a sustainable form, local development is stimulated by valorizing the knowledge of farmers and by exploiting the potential existing in a variety of production systems.

Sustainable farming systems involving the diversification of crops and livestock have been shown to be more resilient to serious disturbances over the long-term.

The agroecological approach promotes sustainable agroecosystems by favouring non-specialized produc-

One of the effects of gas emissions is the increase in global temperatures and, consequently, the rise in sea levels, changes to the patterns of ocean currents and winds, and a higher frequency of critical hydrological events such as droughts, floods, hurricanes and so on.

Extrapolating from current trends, average global temperatures will increase from 1.4°C to 5.8°C over the next hundred years if the emission of greenhouse gases is not controlled. Even if control measures are implemented, the planet's average temperature may still rise by up to 3°C.

tion, based on the principle of the diversity of resources and production practices. Diverse practices are combined within the same production system, seeking to integrate the different subsystems and the recycling of materials, energy, water and residues.

The flow of energy is channelled to depend less on non-renewable resources, achieving a better equilibrium between the use of internal and external energy within the system as a whole. Resistance to pests increases since habitat diversity is encouraged, ensuring the presence of natural enemies. Maintaining 'closed' nutrient cycles (recycling nutrients within the production system) reduces the losses within the agroecosystem, allowing a sizeable part of the extracted nutrients to return to the productive unit.

In contrast to specialization in a single product, maintaining diversity protects farmers from the risks inherent in the activity, such as market fluctuations and adverse climatic conditions. Working in this direction, Agroecology promotes and strengthens the **adaptability** (or flexibility) and **resilience** of agroecosystems.

As they depend less on external inputs (such as pesticides, industrial fertilizers, selected seeds and fossil fuels), agroecological systems tend to reduce production costs and lessen debt risks. This means that more of the income generated by farmers is kept within their own communities, providing them with greater **autonomy** and **stability**.

Agroecology encourages productive activities that complement the main activity on the farm production unit, such as animal breeding, craftwork, fishing and installation of household vegetable plots. Consequently, it provides more options to farming families, both in terms of producing food for domestic consumption and the possibilities for selling produce on the market, reducing the risks of food insecurity and allowing family farmers to experience greater **stability** and **confidence**, in their activity.

Agroecological systems tend to be more **productive** than the specialized monocrops of conventional agriculture. Efficiency is measured on the basis of the unit's production as a whole and not just by the output of each activity in isolation. A good example are the mixed crops of maize, beans, manioc and pumpkin, which, when combined, tend to produce more per unit area than the production of each of these crops in isolation.

By valorizing traditional knowledge and stimulating the organization and participation of farming families in the democratic processes of decision-making, both at local level and at regional and national level, Agroecology strengthens the **equity** and **self-management** of rural communities.

CLIMATE CHANGES AND AGROECOLOGY

Agroecological experiences are being developed in various parts of the world by thousands of farmers, communities, groups and organizations of rural workers, seeking to guarantee the population's nutrition and food sovereignty and security. These initiatives are managed in autonomous and participative form, based on the exchange of experiences and the interaction between traditional and scientific knowledge.

Brazil is home to many initiatives in Agroecology, which the maintenance of diversified, productive, stable and resilient agroecosystems. These experiences include the implantation of agroforestry systems, pest and disease management, livestock breeding, the use of medicinal plants, the recovery, preservation and dissemination of local seed varieties, and many other initiatives, giving rise to a wide range of methodological and technical models.

- In Paraíba, the community seed banks supported by the Semi-Arid Region Alliance Seed Network have encouraged the use of local varieties adapted to the region's climatic challenges, a form of promoting the traditional of farmers as a way of conserving agrobiodiversity.
- In Minas Gerais, the Zona da Mata Centre of Alternative Technologies has promoted the implantation of Agroforestry Systems (AFSs) in family farming. The trees incorporated into the productive systems favour biomass production and nutrient recycling, making firewood and timber available to the families and diminishing the pressure on conservation units and the region's remaining fragments of Atlantic Rainforest, as well as maintaining humidity, reducing temperatures and protecting soils against erosion.
- In the semi-arid region of the Northeast, an area which suffers from frequent droughts, the dissemination of decentralized rainwater capture and management sys-

Celso Marcatto/ActionAid/ Brasil



tems, such as plate cisterns and underground dams, comprise examples of water resource conservation and management initiatives that enable local people to live with the great variability in the region's climate.

These experiences contain principles and concepts that can contribute to the process of ensuring the sustainability of farming systems within the new reality imposed by climate change at global level. It is up to governmental and non-governmental organizations who are committed to reducing world poverty and hunger to support the construction of farming production systems that are truly resistant, sustainable and less vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions.

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1 IPCC: *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, established by the *World Meteorological Organization* and the *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP), to evaluate information on climate change, its impact and the options for adaptation and mitigation.

2 *Stern Review*: a report commissioned by the British Government from Nicholas Stern, the former chief economist of the *World Bank*, on global warming's potential impacts on the world economy. The study, made public in October 2006, suggests that Global Gross Domestic Product could fall by 3% if the planet's average temperature rises by three degrees Celsius.

Agroecosystems are artificial ecosystems since they are manipulated by humans to obtain foods, fibres and seeds. They depend on external inputs of materials and energy for their maintenance (Gliessman 2001).



Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

Turning Africa into a repository
for failed agricultural technologies

The 'new' Green Revolution push in Africa is directed squarely at increasing agricultural production as the continent's most fundamental development priority.

INTRODUCTION

The 'new' Green Revolution push in Africa is directed squarely at increasing agricultural production as the continent's most fundamental development priority.¹ Speaking at a high-level seminar in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2004, former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan appealed for an all-out effort to combat poverty and create a Green Revolution in Africa. Annan's speech is commonly referred to as the 'Addis Call to Action.'² Indeed, the United Nations continue to call for a '21st Century Green Revolution' for Africa as a necessary prerequisite to achieving the targets of the First Millennium Goal: to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. Additional reports promoting the regeneration of Africa's agricultural sector include the InterAcademy Council Report (IAC 2004) commissioned by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and the UK Government's Commission for Africa Report (CfA 2005).

Heads of State in Africa have also in various ways thrown their weight behind the call for a Green Revolution as a necessary prerequisite to dealing with poverty and hunger in Africa. The Green Revolution has the endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) via its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP 2002), and the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP).³ At the Africa Fertilizer Summit held during June 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria, African Heads of State made commitments to raise the distribution of inorganic fertilizers from 8kg/ha to 50kg/ha by 2015. At a Summit on Food Security in December 2006, they made further commitments towards supporting the implementation of a Green Revolution in Africa.⁴

Heads of State in Africa have also in various ways thrown their weight behind the call for a Green Revolution as a necessary prerequisite to dealing with poverty and hunger in Africa.



However, the most visible actor in the Green Revolution onslaught is the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), a partnership between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation⁵ ('Gates Foundation'). AGRA is designed to help millions of small-scale farmers lift themselves out of poverty and hunger by significantly boosting farm productivity with Green Revolution type technologies.⁶ To this end, the Gates Foundation has committed \$100 million and the Rockefeller Foundation, \$50 million for the next five years.⁷

Here we present an overview of the AGRA-led Green Revolution in Africa and analyze some of the likely implications for Africa.

ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN REVOLUTION IN AFRICA (AGRA)

AGRA's main focus is on crop breeding where an ambitious 5-year target has been set to develop 100 new varieties from core crops such as maize, cassava, sorghum and millet. In June 2007, three years after his famous 'Addis Call for Action', Kofi Annan was appointed as the chairperson of AGRA. It is anticipated that one of Annan's primary roles will be to draw on his considerable political connections, extensive network and general clout to push for global, regional and national policies in support of AGRA and its programs. AGRA board members are drawn heavily from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, people close to the CGIAR and the corporate sector in South Africa.

AGRA is presenting a highly ambitious and seemingly grandiose package geared towards a revolution that explores:

a variety of ways to strengthen markets, including through pro-poor market information systems; improved storage; processing, and utilization of local food crops; commodity exchanges that improve regional trade in grains; and ways to stabilize market prices and improve farmers' access to credit. AGRA will explore ways to improve the competitiveness of African farm produce in global markets.⁸

Another key component of AGRA's strategy to radically boost agricultural productivity in Africa is its efforts to implement a special grassroots-based delivery system in which a farmer can 'walk to a shop or kiosk in his rural back yard and readily access high quality certified seeds.'⁹ Put another way, AGRA is committed to putting in place an entire value chain from 'inputs to markets' that will pave the way for the emergence of a new rural private sector with agro-dealers starting to

provide farmers with inputs, traders buying produce, and agro-processors and exporters contracting small farmers to produce crops for them.

The NGO GRAIN explains the 'logic' of the agro-dealer system as follows:

the idea is to fund public breeders to develop new varieties (as the private sector does not want to do this), then to fund private companies to sell these to farmers and to provide credit to purchase these seeds (because otherwise they cannot pay for them). AGRA is all about creating an effective demand for its own product, prescribing a model of development that is not able to survive on its own.¹⁰

As a first step towards setting up its agro-dealer scheme of selling 'improved' seeds, pesticides and fertilizers to poor farmers in Africa, it has hired a US NGO called Citizen's Network for Foreign Affairs to lay the groundwork. Farmers in Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi have been specifically targeted. In December 2007 AGRA launched its Agro-Dealer Development Program (ADP), designed to supply 1.6 million rural farming households in Africa with essential agricultural inputs. To facilitate this aim, it has awarded US\$13 million in grants to establish nationwide networks of agro-dealers in Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya by providing emerging small retailers in rural communities - many of whom are farmers themselves - with the training, capital and credit they need to become certified agro-dealers.¹¹

The notion that small rural shopkeepers will somehow provide farmers with the agronomic technical assistance needed to maintain environments has been described as 'ludicrous'. At best, these salesmen and women will help a handful of foreign companies to increase sales of expensive, unnecessary, damaging and dangerous fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, and to sell cheap foreign grains to local populations, further undercutting local farmers and their home markets.¹²

The Agro-Dealer Development Programs in all three countries will implement a variety of 'innovative' financing tools to increase the flow of credit to rural areas, and provide farmers and agro-dealers with start-up capital. These tools include 'guarantee facilities' that share risks equally (50-50) with agricultural firms that supply farm inputs to the agro-dealers in rural areas. AGRA Board members are expected to lobby governments, donors and commercial banks to increase lending to these agro-dealers on a national scale.

MALAWI: AGRA'S POSTER CHILD

Malawi is being showcased as the success story for the Green Revolution in Africa following the apparently miraculous transformation in its food production. Drawing on the World Bank's Development Report 2007,¹³ showing that agricultural growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is beginning to rise, Pedro Sanchez, Director of Tropical Agriculture at the Earth Institute at Columbia University and co-leader of the Millennium Villages project, said recently that 'the Green Revolution called for by Kofi Annan in 2004 is really beginning to happen, as countries like Malawi have gone from net food importers to net food exporters.'¹⁴ According to Sanchez, even the World Bank, which has aggressively pursued agriculture liberalization in Africa, is supportive of seed and fertilizer subsidies in what Sanchez describes as a '180-degree turn for the better.' The central message is, therefore, that by simply subsidizing fertilizers and seeds to grow improved maize strains, countries like Malawi have been able to improve their agricultural productivity.

In 2006/07, the government of Malawi provided farmers with some US\$60 million in so called 'smart' or 'targeted' subsidies. Based on this system, farmers are able to exchange government-issued vouchers at certified agro-dealers in exchange for partially subsidized farm supplies. According to Richard Chapweteka, Director of the Rural Development Trust (RUMARK) in Malawi, 'The results of all these efforts - plus rains and Malawi Government policies - have been stupendous. In 2006/07 the country generated an additional maize surplus of 1.4 million metric tons. It sold US\$160 million worth of maize and donated 10,000 metric tons of food aid to neighbouring Lesotho and Swaziland'.¹⁵

Guarantee facilities are also reported to be showing strong initial success. Over the last five years, since the program was first initiated with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, each dollar of guaranteed credit has generated 16 dollars worth of farm supply sales in rural areas, with the loan default rate of certified agro-dealers at less than 1.5 percent.¹⁶

IMPLICATIONS OF A GREEN REVOLUTION PUSH IN AFRICA

Three key sets of questions need to be answered by the proponents of the new Green Revolution in Africa:

1) what impact did the Green Revolution have in Asia and Latin America and are there any crucial lessons for an agricultural revolution in Africa, appropriate to the realities of agriculture on the continent?

2) despite widespread opinion to the contrary, the Green Revolution did not by-pass Africa; yet there is a poor understanding of why it failed to succeed, or why a development paradigm that quite clearly has been unable to capture the imagination of African farmers and that has clearly proven to be inappropriate is still being pursued; and

3) much closer scrutiny needs to be given to the appropriateness of the technological innovations embedded in the New Green Revolution package and more specifically of the underlying political and ideological philosophy which seeks to integrate African agricultural systems into the global economy.

The consequences of the Green Revolution have been strongly contested with many divergent and conflicting views resulting in highly polarised positions. The least contested area of debate is probably the issue of yield increases. Here most commentators appear to agree that in highly manipulated environments in ecologically productive zones, with access to irrigation and the correct application of the inputs from the Green Revolution High-Yield Varieties (HYVs), would produce higher yields than traditional varieties under similar conditions. Yet agrarian development is not simply about food self-sufficiency.

The debate on the negative impacts of artificial fertilizers and chemical inputs in the form of pesticides and herbicides is well known. There are additional concerns that Green Revolution technologies tend to favour the development of monocultural production, leading to the neglect of inter-cropping and more ecologically-sound traditional cropping systems. Another key factor, especially in the current context of climate change and increasing fuel costs, is the high energy dependency of the Green Revolution agricultural development model. This relates directly to the emphasis on mechanization and irrigation systems, and more indirectly to the energy embedded in the production of the various chemicals and specifically the production of fertilizers. This is exacerbated by the associated transportation factor, not only for transportation of inputs but also, in a trade-addicted world, for the transportation of outputs. The biofuels issue must also be included in this particular analysis.

If the Green Revolution is considered an integral part of 'development' then serious consideration must be given to its social, economic and developmental aspects. There are major concerns that the Green Revolution accelerated the differentiation of the peasantry, led to an increase in landlessness, intensified class

conflict and did not always prioritise the nutritional value of HYVs. Even the IRRI (International Rice Research Institute) noted 'that while the Green Revolution has helped ensure supplies of rice, it has failed to address 'hidden hunger' for essential micronutrients or malnutrition, which afflicts more than 2 billion of the world's poor.'¹⁷ A report by CGIAR's Science Council Secretariat acknowledged that there are:

Very few studies that measure or document the social, equity, environmental, or health impacts of agricultural research were found. This is not peculiar to the SSA region, but represents the profile of impact assessment literature globally and reflects the fact that the methodology for quantifying productivity impacts of research outputs/outcomes is much more advanced than quantifying other types of research impacts.¹⁸

Furthermore, as Freebairn states: 'Disparate findings on the influence of the rapid introduction of high-yield varieties 25 years after their introduction provide no consensus from the academic community about the income distribution effects of this technological strategy.'¹⁹ The debate continues and in a more recent analysis of the impact of the Green Revolution in Pakistan, Niazi argues that:²⁰

While in aggregate terms it is true that the Green Revolution in Pakistan has managed both to meet national food requirements and to fuel economic growth, in disaggregate terms it has nevertheless fallen short of expectations held initially and defented subsequently. For this reason, the experience of the Green Revolution in Pakistan tends to validate the counter-arguments made by its critics, who pointed out then and since that it would merely worsen the incidence of rural poverty, and the misdistribution of rural incomes and assets.

The 'disparate' findings on the various impacts of the Green Revolution noted above should engender caution and, minimally, the application of the 'precautionary principle' to any neutral decision-maker. The African continent should not be seen as a repository for questionable development practices that have not met unqualified success in other parts of the globe.



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1 The UN Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

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African social movements

and the fight for the right to food

The right to food in Africa is pre-eminent, urgent and essential. Making the right a reality means calling on everyone to contribute, especially governments. And some of the key actors in this process are the social movements.

AFRICA AND HUNGER

Africa is the continent most affected by chronic and acute hunger. According to FAO, 852 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition globally. Of these, 206 million live in Africa. The primary cause is the lack of access to means of production such as the earth, water, seeds and adequate tools. In fact, according to Vandana Shiva,¹ the causes of hunger are “the combination of losing land and losing control over the local resources such as water, seeds and biodiversity needed by community farming, but now in the hands of global corporations.” Given this situation, the right to food in Africa is pre-eminent, urgent and essential. Making the right a reality means calling on everyone to contribute, especially governments. And some of the key actors in this process are the social movements. Since these movements have played a prominent role in building and leading the fight for the right to food in Africa, the following text describes their contribution.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The historical framework for the Human Right to Adequate Food can be identified in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration enabled this right to be moulded into many other legal instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1966, various national constitutions (e.g. South Africa, Malawi, Namibia and Uganda) and numerous regional and international declarations. Special mention should be made of general comment 12 made by the Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerning the right to food included in the ICESCR (article 11 number 2).

“The right to food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement through humanly dignified mechanisms and forms.”²

Achieving, sustaining and improving food rights is first and foremost the State’s responsibility. Each State must: i) introduce legal regulations that contribute to the production of food, ii) develop strategies for reducing hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, iii) adopt positions that protect their populations from any action that may ultimately infringe on their right to food, iv) invest as much as possible in viable actions designed to eradicate hunger.

This process necessarily implies a long-term political vision, a large base of support for building this project, a widespread feeling of ownership of the challenge at hand and a collective capacity to produce knowledge and alternatives. Apart from the State, one of the actors who collectively harbour these pre-conditions are the social movements. Here the term social movements is used to refer to a collective form of organization of specific groups with shared objectives, based on solidarity, interactions and social justice.³ The social movements essentially resist and fight against unjust and excluding social systems. To this end, they challenge elites, authorities

and structures that impoverish populations and damage the environment. Social movements must “interfere decisively in the debate and directions taken by public policies.”⁴ As part of this process, areas such as governance, trade, the environment, and social and human capital become central to promoting the social changes needed to attain the right to adequate food.

Although contained in binding legal instruments and elsewhere, the right to food very often appears nor more than empty words. Hence the insistent need for continual action to force governments and public authorities at all levels to make achieving and safeguarding food rights for everyone at all times an essential part of their political agenda.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT IN AFRICA

Social movements, by nature, are linked with struggles of resistance. In Africa, resistance and the fight for the most basic rights, such as the right to food, have always formed part of the history of social movements. History recognizes and documents the resistance of Africans to external occupation from Ethiopia (1450) to Namibia (1990). During colonization, ‘social’ movements provided the embryos for the emergence and consolidation of independence movements. The latter set out by raising people’s awareness of the need to fight the exploitation and social injustices inflicted on them by colonial regimes. It was this struggle that eventually led to the independence of African countries.

After winning independence, the social movements turned their attention to the challenge of rebuilding these nations. They provided considerable help in resettling populations, distributing food and clothes during emergencies and catastrophes, and even in cases of armed conflict, whether internal or promoted and assisted by outside forces. However, there is a strong contingent of Africans who sustain that we cannot speak of social movements in the strict sense of the term until this period (1950s-70s). So far the fights for independence had been a project uniting everyone and where the liberation movements represented the people as an organized whole. Indeed independence was soon followed by steps towards the project of building African unity.

In the 1980s, though, African peoples began to feel that their leaders no longer shared the same ideas for building a unified Africa governed by solidarity, prosperity and peace. African leaders took strategic decisions that ran counter to the interests of their peoples. Countries were plunged into bloody internal wars (e.g. Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo), others began democratic reforms but failed to implement them, generating tensions and violent conflicts (e.g. Madagascar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe). Others still were subject to military coups (e.g. Burkina Faso, Togo and Guinea-Bissau). At the same time, African economies were unable to achieve the growth needed to meet internal demands and ended up accumulating massive foreign debts.

As a result, they had to endure a high level of dependency in relation to the former colonial powers, eventually adopting policies and reforms imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and IMF), who promoted structural adjustment programs designed to introduce a free market socio-economic system.

It is in this African political and economic context that social movements emerged as an alternative for realizing Kwame Nkrumah’s dream (of a free, prosperous, united and solidary Africa). Ghana’s first president declared that his dream was not just the independence of Ghana but that of the whole continent. This gave rise to the idea of creating the United States of Africa – or the African Union, in other words.

THE STRUGGLE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA

In Africa, social movements have played a decisive role in building the ‘African renaissance,’ which includes achieving the right to food through combating hunger. These movements work in key areas that aim to guarantee access to food, decent living conditions, the promotion of gender equality, access to education and health with special attention to young women. Examples include movements such as: ROPPA (Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organizations), which fights for economic justice; Via Campesina, which works to promote the political voice of small and medium-sized farmers. ESAFF (East and Southern Africa Farmers Forum), which implements projects in areas such as improving the productive capacities of farmers and their links to the market; LPM, which campaigns for access to land for the landless; the FDC (Community Development Foundation), which develops actions to protect children and promote community development in a variety of ways; and the Women’s Forum, which combines a range of organizations working in the area of promoting for women’s rights.

Various strategies are adopted by social movements to ensure access to food. In general, small farmers, fishing communities and environmentalist movements resist government attempts to introduce and manipulate inappropriate policies (essentially neoliberal in kind). In Africa these movements campaign for the implementation of food sovereignty policies as a vital part of agrarian development. They defend the **need** for the State to intervene since it is clear that self-regulation of the neoliberal free market system is a failure. Indeed the current food crisis provoked by the sharp rise in food prices illustrates this incapacity for the market to respond fairly. This can only be achieved through investment in technological, human and physical capital, the strengthening of public institutions and the creation of objective conditions for a balance between supply and demand, free of monetary speculation, as well as the adoption of an attitude of transparency and good governance by States and by multinational corporations. Here the need for specific market regulation becomes readily apparent as a way of counterbalancing the control exerted by multinational companies.



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With their wide base of producers, social movements have shown that the productivity, quality and competitiveness of their products can be augmented through the use of suitable techniques and technologies, such as agroecology, rural workers' schools and the natural control of pests. This reinforces the necessity and viability of alternative agricultural models and an endogenous and sustainable development model for Africa. Examples of this approach include the initiatives developed by organizations like ActionAid and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

Through their mobilization and their diverse experience and skills in training, social movements can enable the production and sharing of knowledge on good practices for producing and conserving nutritious food. At the same time, the mobilization of African social movements enables the introduction of political initiatives designed to ensure greater political power for small and medium-sized producers, as well as the inclusion of food rights within African regulative frameworks. As a result of such initiatives, some countries have adopted legislation that allows more positive regulations and practices, valorizing local knowledge and enhancing civil society's involvement in the processes of formulating agrarian policies. A common base has also emerged in the fight against policies that prevent people from obtaining their right to food. This movement has rejected en masse the use of genetically modified seeds, the adoption of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the Green Revolution.

The actions of African social movements such as ROPPA (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations), Via Campesina Africa, CNOP (National Coordination of Rural Organizations), NASFAM (National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi), UNAC (National Rural Workers Union), Indaba and many others have enabled a better understanding of the complex African reality in terms of agrarian reform and food rights. Indeed, the right to food is a major issue for African social movements, meaning that, today, mechanisms are being established to improve the coordination, exchanges and public participation of different groups on working commissions and in forums for planning, assessing and monitoring farming and trade policies. African social movements are currently presenting alternative proposals for increasing production and productivity so that all people have dignified access to adequate food.

Events such as the world social forums and international conferences have allowed social movements to express their deep criticism of many aspects of agrarian reforms, revealing their astute analysis of the actions and strategies adopted by States and international bodies to promote development. The declared objectives of these plans are essentially positive. However, the strategies used to implement these plans expose a failure to place human beings at the epicentre of the process, limiting the full and effective participation of local people in implementing the initiatives designed to achieve their right to adequate food. Social movements argue for inclusive strategies based on principles of participation and the freedom to choose between the different options for promoting development. African social movements have developed a critical analytic awareness of the various contexts linked to food rights. This has led various sectors of society to assume a proactive role in fighting for better conditions that enable the right to adequate food to be achieved, safeguarded and improved.

Along with the concept of food sovereignty, social movements have raised the urgent need to localize development initiatives. They argue that the latter must be based on the concrete reality of the local region – hence the demand for territorial assessments undertaken in a participative and negotiated form in which the producers are the main driving force. It is because of this combination of existing resources and the opportunities that may be generated that the State must facilitate local people's access to resources for the production of food. Joint actions in networks in Africa – and beyond with like networks in Asia, the Americas and Europe – have promoted initiatives such as the need to localize development. In other words, ensuring sustainable development necessarily

implies an analysis of the local environment (the territory) and the effective participation of local people.

However, African social movements still need to improve some aspects of their work, such as combining traditional forms of mobilization and the struggle of marginalized populations with the use of more aggressive media campaigns and the strengthening of cooperation, coordination and cross-thematic alliances.

THE RIGHT TO FOOD: WHAT AFRICAN RURAL MOVEMENTS WANT

1. Food availability

In advocating food sovereignty, social movements are fully aware that achieving this aim requires a rise in production. However, the central issue here is how to promote this increase. In the view of African social movements, any increase in production must primarily focus on resolving human nutritional problems – in other words, ensuring that there is enough food to eat. The objective is not production for the sake of profit, but to ensure a universal right – the food a person needs to live. This production must therefore be pursued in harmony with the natural world, observing the basic rules of the culture and respecting the limits imposed by the local environment. Scaled increases in production help meet the needs of the family, the village, the community, the territory, the country, the region and the world. Not the inverse. The basic premise of independence is the capacity to feed oneself, at least in terms of staple foods.

2. Food access

The production of foods must be first and foremost for human use. Hence the consumption of foods forms the epicentre of every productive chain. Foods are produced in order for people to be able to eat. Just as production needs to correspond to the limits of nature, consumption needs to correspond to the limits of social justice. Foods must be sold at a reasonable price so that consumers can access them. The access to nutritious and healthy cannot be the exclusive preserve of the few. Social movements promote the valorization of traditional diets. People must be free to choose the type of foods that they wish to use and consume.

3. Food use

Social movements also emphasize the fact that foods have other essential uses, ranging from their use for cures to their transformation into other materials needed for the production of energy. However, the other functions of food products should never endanger their primary objective – feeding people.

4. Sustainability

The production, conservation, transformation and commercialization of foods must be pursued in such a way that they allow everyone in the process to receive equitable benefits. Wealth generation must be accompanied by the distribution

of these profits to all the actors involved. In order to achieve and sustain people's food rights, African social movements advocate – among other actions – the need for the State to intervene to regulate the processes of producing, conserving, transforming and selling foods. In other words, the State's intervention and strategic distribution of resources must focus on the producers (who constitute 80% of Africa's population) as the basic units for promoting development. Social movements therefore argue that the State must create the right conditions by adopting appropriate measures that stimulate the acquisition of knowledge and technologies by small and medium-sized producers. In this way, the transformative and innovative knowledge of rural men and women, young people, livestock herders, fishing communities, the landless and homeless, and other vulnerable groups, can be applied to generate capital that allows the local community to assume the leading role in its own development. The sustainability of food rights depends on the community's capacity to control the four levels of production described above. Only in this way can food fulfil its role of keeping people alive and healthy, while the producers fulfil their role of producing this food.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Food rights contribute decisively to increasing the capacities and abilities of producers (owners of these rights) as a way of improving family income, ensuring adequate food and allowing economic independence. However, for this to occur, communities must have access to and control natural resources such as earth, water, seeds, forests and wildlife. This remains an area of conflict in many African countries. Social movements also demand that the State reassumes control of the markets or at least controls their regulation.

African social movements are gradually building their capacity to influence the way in which economic activities are developed in the separate countries and on the continent as a whole. The political awareness of African producers is also increasing, including the need for global campaigns to resolve national problems. The results of these processes are visible in the social forums and in the structural transformation under way in many African nations.

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Building a community network for protecting and reclaiming natural resources in Cambodia



Marta Antunes / IFSN / ActionAid

Fishermen in Cambodia

CNFSC vision

All Cambodian people have the right to safe, sustained and quality food

CNFSC mission

Work in cooperation with other relevant networks at local, national and international levels for all Cambodian people to access the right to food sovereignty through other appropriate mechanisms.

CNFSC objectives

1. Mobilising the community, collecting information and analysing hunger issues, as well as finding solutions appropriate to their own communities.
2. Building solidarity inside and outside the communities to fight hunger together.
3. Building community capacity on the right to livelihoods through negotiation, coordination, and dialogue at national and international level, as well as enlarging the network to establish a stronger voice.
4. Creating spaces and opportunities to dialogue with relevant stakeholders concerning food policies in Cambodia, as well as sharing and learning from other experiences.
5. Supporting the participation mechanisms at local, national and international levels.

In late 2006, a group of 15 community-based partner organisations of ActionAid established the Community Network for Food Sovereignty in Cambodia (CNFSC). The network consists of 32 members from 15 provinces and towns and a core group of 11 representatives from the partner organisations and communities with experience in organising and mobilising people around food rights issues. All members of the CNFSC network meet twice yearly to share ideas and information concerning their campaign work, as well as build capacities among their groups. The core group meets quarterly to coordinate the follow-up activities and update support plans, as well as set up new plans to support any members facing serious problems. The CNFSC has clearly defined strategies to develop its work and contribute to a Cambodia where “all Cambodian people have the right to safe, sustained and quality food.”

- Critical analysis by the communities of the root causes of hunger. Hunger is caused by exclusion, powerlessness, injustice and discrimination. Addressing hunger means dealing with the root causes of hunger; the work should

therefore be directed towards combating these causes, although some immediate needs must also be met.

- Capacity building for community network members: It is crucial to strengthen the capacity of community members on other key issues, including policies and laws.
- Linkage and integration with the Community Organization process: CNFSC network is not a project but a continuous process designed to mobilise local people to analyse the root causes of their hunger as well as find appropriate solutions to deal with these problems.
- Solidarity among community members (both inside and outside): From practical experience, advocacy can succeed only if there is a high level of commitment, community organisation and solidarity among advocates.
- Network linkage at different levels: The network should be community-led and its strategic activities implemented at different levels: local, provincial, national and international, depending on requirements.
- Supporters: NGO partners, other relevant networks and other INGOs and LNGOs will provide support to the network.

WHAT ARE CNFSC MEMBERS DOING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO PROMOTE CHANGE?

In grounding the activities of the food security network, ActionAid and its partners have been helping the CNFSC core team and members to strengthen their network, build the capacity of the focal team and that of local people in relation to hunger issues, community organisation, and collecting and analysing issues. One example is the work developed by ActionAid and SAMAKY (solidarity) in Kampong Cham province. Fishing is the main livelihood, followed by farming, in the 20 villages where SAMAKY and ActionAid develop their right to food work.

In Kampon Cham three focal persons were selected and their capacities strengthened through a series of community food security and core team meetings. These three people – one of whom is from the partner organisation and the other two from Mien community – have played a facilitating role in organising groups of people from the community, raising their awareness on hunger issues, especially in terms of their access to and control over natural resources. They have also created opportunities for people to communicate issues and messages to government authorities at different levels and to those responsible for exploiting the community's resources. This work is very important since it has helped people to identify the root causes of their hunger and to understand that they hold rights and can work in conjunction to ensure these rights are fulfilled.

MOBILISING COMMUNITIES AND BUILDING THEIR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Reclaiming access to Thom Lake.

Measuring 3km wide by 7km long, Thom is the second largest lake in Cambodia after the Tonle Sap Lake.

12,000 families living in three districts benefit from Thom Lake. SAMAKY has been working with 1,500 families from nine villages in Mien Commune to reclaim access to the lake. This means restoring Rolum Por dike (50m wide, 50m long and 7m high) and extending the community fishery space. The dike was built during the Pol Pot regime to

increase the volume of water retained in the lake, releasing it via two weirs. For years this has allowed the community to control the level of water and fish in a sustainable way. However, the dike was breached by individuals conspiring with the local and district authorities to exploit the fish resources.

If the lake dries up, we don't have fish or enough water to irrigate the rice field. In order to end local hunger, the dike must be restored urgently. But, the fishery authority is always preventing us from doing it.

So Ann, 44, one of the focal persons working on food security

If the dike is sealed again, there will be more water and thus more community fishing space and more aquatic forest – meaning more fish in the lake. Otherwise, there will be little remaining water, no fish and a growing influx of alluvial soil deposits from a nearby community lake, Keh Lake, which also dries up during the dry season as a result of the dike being breached.

In 1998, 64 percent of the fishing lots were distributed for private access. The main fishing lot owner, who bought the entire lake from the district authority, is known simply as Huch by local people, including the SAMAKY staff. He owns all the fishing lots on the lake. The only man they know by name is Tith Try, aged 43, who allegedly bought a part of the lake located in Mien Commune, meaning he now controls the fishing lot

areas in the commune. Fishing lots have also been sold on to another ten fishing lot owners.

As a result, the villagers, who depend primarily on fishing to make a living, can only access the centre of the lake, far from shore, since the rest has been distributed to privately owned fishing lots.

Since then people have caught only one or two kilos of fish per day, while some fishermen return empty-handed. Some use the chhib (a handy fishing tool previously allowed even on privately owned fishing lots). Using this tool, people may spend hours fishing, but catch only a very small amount of small fish or shrimp. This situation worsened when the owners started to exploit their plots for fishing and banned even chhib fishing.

I gave my consent by thumbprint in support of the community's demand to restore the dike and ensure more water. More water for more fish. Water for irrigating vegetables and for the cattle to drink. If there is more flooded water, more fish will be left in the aquatic forest. If the water level is lower, they will easily catch all the fish.

Chhoeurn Rein, a 50-year old widow

There are two options for people to 'buy' access to the private lots. First, the District Fishery authority allows people to fish in the privately owned fishing lots if they pay a yearly fee per family for the use of fishing nets and



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one boat, or for a samrah (barricade). The second option is for them to pay for the catch through their own labour: the fisherman receives 2 portions while the remaining 8 portions go to the fishing lot owner.

However people are only allowed to pay and enter the fishing lots for a period of less than 4 months between 26th Feb and 1st June. From June onwards, the Fishery Department bans all fishing.

Reclaim access to Takot Creek

The Takot dam was built during the Pol Pot regime in 1978. It was used to irrigate paddy fields in two districts and is supposed to irrigate about 2,000 hectares of rice fields in Mien Commune. Currently the creek benefits three communes: Mien Commune, Prek Krabao Commune and Chhrey Veau Commune (which belong to two districts: Prey Chhor and Kang Meas). Takot Creek is located in Keh Village, home to 118 families (515 individuals). The people make a living by fishing and growing rice and vegetables.

In 2004, an individual named Chuon Vuthy, in collusion with the local authority, tricked Mien Commune people into signing and thumbprinting a five-year lease (running from 9th October 2004 to 25th April 2009) to exploit the creek resources. In return, a promise was made to build a canal for the community to irrigate their rice field – this was never delivered. A local man called Srun was hired to manage use of the creek. The leaseholder has

exploited the creek resources every year and banned people from the community from fishing, contrary to the agreement.

The leaseholder requested an extension to the agreement from the local authority, but the people rejected the proposal. Instead they demanded that the owner build the canal as promised in the transferring agreement. The canal is expected to be 15,000 meters long, 2 meters wide and 1 meter high.

If there is water, people can farm twice a year. We also encourage people to grow crops, such as corn, which provide higher yields. They can cultivate subsistence crops one season while growing crops for sale in the next. They will have water, fish and later harvests. After they grow rice, they will be able to catch enough fish for a meal if the creek is recuperated and conserved.

Sun Chantha, 51, a member of the SAMAKY fishing community and the Takot Water Conservation Commission

Reclaiming land for the landless

In addition to demanding repair of the Rolum Por dike and construction of a canal adjacent to Takot Lake, the food security team also helped people ask for land to be distributed to the landless.

One hundred and sixty of the 207 families are landless. In the first step, a plan was formulated to demand land for 100 families.

So far community representatives have collected thumbprint signatures from 50 families. The thumbprinted requests will

be stamped by the village chief and sent to the commune chief, district governor and finally the provincial governor.

The basis for this action is the declaration made by Hun Sen, cited in the English language newspaper *The Cambodia Daily* last year, ordering the provincial governor to allocate plots of land to landless people.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY

In securing the rights to and control over the resources, SAMAKY has provided support towards mobilising communities, as well as working in conjunction with the local authority. So far local people have received considerable support from their village leaders. 1,864 villagers from ten villages have taken part in the process of demanding these actions. They sent their petition to the commune in November and to the district in December. However it was later sent back. The representatives then submitted their petition directly to the Provincial Office. They are still following up their demand. Village leaders have been very supportive of the process.

I want all the villagers to demand together. Otherwise the representatives may not believe we are the real representatives. Maybe thousands of people demanding together can be successful.

Chhoeurn Rein

As the village chief, I can only advise people to lend their support. We don't farm. But we do fish. If we can repair the dike, we can conserve the fish resources. If you want to get people's thumbprints, just tell me and I'll inform them publicly. We are helping people in their attempts to conserve the lake and benefit the younger generations.

56-year old Kampong Samnagn village leader, Chea Sok

STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO DEMAND

Building the capacities of the community's people – the real sufferers from the owners' exploitation of its resources – is an extremely important part of amplifying their voices and enabling their ownership of the process. Given the necessary technical and legal support from partner organizations, focal



persons can assist people in collecting information and identifying the relevant people in authority to whom they should address their demands. Awareness of Fishery Law and their rights to natural resources has been enhanced, and training provided on community fishing. Helping local people to understand their rights, as well as the root causes and implications of poverty, is an important and integral part of the work.

When the people from Takot Creek thumbprinted their agreement to transfer the river to the control of private individuals in 2004, they had no idea of the impacts of the decision. Now they understand the causes and consequences. They understand that if they allow private ownership to continue, the benefits will still accrue to the individual owner rather than the community. They learnt that they have the right to demand access and the right to their livelihoods. And they learnt to have the confidence to fight for these rights.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE: PROMOTING CHANGE

After people were made aware of their rights and the need to claim them, help was given to implementing the mechanism for demanding these rights.

In October 2007, 27 community people were selected for a two-day training course on the draft community fishery statute. On 27th November 2007, the community fishery commission was elected with the assistance and recognition of the provincial fishery department. Its aim is to crack down on illegal fishing practices and conserve local fishing areas. A group of eleven representatives (three of them women) were elected from the 9 villages from Mien Commune. However support has been mobilised from ten villages. In March a plan was formulated to organise a community assembly representing people from nine villages. In the assembly the community – together with the local authority and the fishery department – will formally approve the community fishery statute. The statute is being finalised with information currently being compiled for inclusion in the statute's 24 articles. Contributions for using and conserving

We farm here, but we buy fish from the market. It's not logical.

We need to elicit the roots causes of people's poverty. Why does the rice paddy become infertile? Why can't people access the creek?

They don't listen to our people. Unless the Mien Fishery Community (SAMAKY) – all 19 villages – and the media work together, we won't succeed.

The five-year mandate is still not concluded, but we need to make a start. We want people to eradicate poverty. We don't want business people to exploit us. We want people to know their rights and to protest. We educate people, collect information, bring people together to analyse the root causes and impacts. We need to help people obtain a firm grasp of the issue. Everyone has become well aware of the issue and all of them have given their agreement by thumbprint.

Were there just a few of us, they would accuse us of rebelling. But if we are many, they won't have enough room to imprison us all.

I work as a community facilitator in SAMAKY's working areas, and the organisation trained me. I haven't much schooling. I wouldn't know anything had I not joined them. After I joined the organisation, I become aware. Before, I didn't even know where to go to obtain legal aid.

Much Nim, 55, one of the three community food security focal persons.



IFSN Core Team members during field visit

Marta Antunes / IFSN / ActionAid

the community resources will be established, such as, for example, the payment of 2 kilos of rice per cultivated hectare to pay the water conservation commission members. The community fishery statute allows family-size catches (100 meter long fishing nets, 20 meter long seines or 5 meter long meshes). Local people have agreed to this plan.

Kampong Samnagn, the village chief, states that if the commune authority does not intervene, they will turn to the district and higher levels of authority. People will bring food with them to protest. The community will organise a forum and invite the Provincial Governor to take part in a discussion on restoring Rolum Por dike, which borders both Thom Lake and Keh Lake.

The forum will be a space for raising problems. The governor will be asked to visit the dike to see what is really happening there.

Following the establishment of the fishing community, people in Keh Village where Takot Creek is located also chose

five people to work on the conservation of Takot Lake. Apart from managing the water at the creek dam, the commission has recently been following up with the promise. In early February a petition was launched to hold the local authorities accountable, especially the commune authority and leaseholder. They asked the leaseholder to build the canal as promised and return the creek to the people by April 2009.

If they don't agree to deliver their promise, we will block the waters using strips of bamboo. We work with the people. We have the right to arrest them. Alone we are weak. If people come together, we can do it. We will meet Srun face-to-face. If they don't agree to our demand, we will take action. Years have passed and they still haven't delivered on their promise. We shall use peaceful means from the outset. We avoid violence, it is against our principles. We work to strengthen our community. If we all are rich, we are rich for a long time. I am committed to achieving this.

Sun Chantha

Eduardo Vallecillo Barberena*, Marta Antunes**
and Ronnie Palacios***

* Coordinator of REDCASSAN

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Right to Food and Food Aid: a marriage in the making

The right to food is a human right and a binding obligation well-established under international laws such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The right to food seeks to ensure that all people can feed themselves with dignity and obliges States to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food.

Because hunger has different faces, the right to food deals with the intersection of the identities of those people experiencing hunger – women, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, rural/urban populations, peasants, artisan fishing populations, extractivists, youths, people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), and others.

The combination of agricultural trade liberalization and de-regulation, the corporate concentration and control of agricultural markets, increased pressures from climate change resulting in poor harvests, the rise in the global demand for food, the upsurge in speculation over food crops, rises in the price of oil and other inputs, and the biofuels fever have made agriculture once again the hot topic in international development policy discussions within a context of soaring food prices. According to FAO, thirty-seven countries are facing a full-blown food crisis that demands urgent external

assistance. As a result of this crisis, global food prices have rocketed 40% in the last 9 months.¹ The real price of rice rose to a 19-year high in March – an increase of 50 per cent in two weeks alone – while the real price of wheat has hit a 28-year high.²

Food Aid is being proposed as one of the emergency solutions to this situation and we agree that providing food in a context of urgency and extreme hunger should be seen as a positive step towards realizing the right to food. Nevertheless, food aid has been having a negative impact on the lives of the most vulnerable people in countries receiving Food Aid, damaging local food security and food sovereignty. Furthermore, transparency concerning the kind of food being delivered is not respected, particularly in the case of GMO foods, obliging poor people to consume insecure and culturally non-adapted food without any choice. Central American countries are particularly vulnerable to the rise of prices. “At this stage it is still premature to provide figures, but we fear a deepening nutritional crisis among the poorest segments of the population, those already food and nutritionally insecure,” says the World Food Program’s El Salvador Country Director, Carlo Scaramella, who is coordinating a regional study into the impact of recent price rises in Central America. “At the same time, we are seeing the emergence of a new group of nutritionally and food-insecure people among the poorest strata of the population. These people have seen their access to food diminish as a result of the rising prices of basic commodities like corn, wheat, rice and beans. It’s a new phenomenon that may potentially affect many people across Central America,”³ he adds.

“*The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in its report ‘The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003’ shows that progress in reducing hunger ‘has virtually stopped.’ According to statements by its Director*

General, Jacques Diouf, ‘the problem is not so much the lack of food, but the lack of political will.’ Five years later the political will of the richest is imposed as they decide to produce agrofuels regardless of the serious consequences for the global food system. Today they are concerned about food prices but speculation on basic commodity prices continues. Today they exploit the need to feed the poor as an excuse to defend the need to increase food production through the use of genetically modified organisms.” Eduardo Vallecillo, REDCASSAN Coordinator.

GMOS AND FOOD AID

Not enough is known about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) to state categorically whether they will be harmful, harmless or beneficial in terms of human health and the environment over the longer term. This applies to GMOs in food, animal feed and seed.

Any organisation that distributes food aid and seeds, or supports such work, carries a high responsibility to the people receiving the aid to ensure food safety and biodiversity. Agencies distributing food aid have an obligation to certify that such food does not cause harm to those who consume it and label the products containing transgenics so that consumers are informed and able to decide if they want to consume them or not.

REDCASSAN (Red Centroamericana por la Soberanía y la Seguridad Alimentaria Nutricional), the IFSN sub-regional network in Central America, which brings together more than 200 organisations of small-scale producers, women’s organisations, indigenous people and NGOs, has reported several cases of GMOs being introduced into Central America through food aid.

The monitoring activities carried out by El Centro Humboldt in Nicaragua since 2001 as part of the ‘Campaña de Biodiversidad’ revealed that the World Food Programme (WFP) has systematically distributed GMO food to highly vulnerable groups, through, inter alia, programmes for pregnant women, infants and food for work, exposing them to health risks. Cereals introduced through food aid programmes included varieties of transgenic corn produced by the multinational Monsanto which were not approved for cultivation or human consumption, and imports from the EU.

The International Food Security Network brings together 23 national food security/sovereignty networks in Asia, Africa and Latin America and three sub regional networks in the Central American region (RedCASSAN), Andean region and the Lusophone African Countries, with ActionAid International as leading partner. One of the network’s main goals is to promote policy dialogues between civil society networks campaigning on the issue of Food Security, national governments and international institutions



Breaking the cycle of dependency on food aid means investing in the country's agricultural system. Thus, while food aid is necessary and welcomed in cases of emergency (when it follows specific criteria), it is crucial to help the countries that are highly dependent on food aid to promote structural changes in their food production, processing, storage and distribution systems.

“We fight against hunger and malnutrition and for the Human Right to Adequate Food, which is a fundamental human right. All human beings have the right to demand that their governments provide special programs against hunger in times of emergency, sustainable strategies for food production, and the means to procure adequate, safe and culturally acceptable food, free from all types of pollutants. We also have the right to deny the introduction of genetically modified organisms in food aid, and the right to produce our own food and protect our natural resources, thereby safeguarding our environment and biodiversity in the process.”
Eduardo Vallecillo, REDCASSAN.

REDSSAG (Red por la Seguridad y la Soberanía Alimentaria de Guatemala), a member of RedCASSAN, has also repeatedly denounced the presence of varieties unfit for human consumption, such as the yellow corn Stalink distributed in 2005 in Camotán y Jocotán. In 2007 the presence of 3 varieties of transgenic corn were detected in an ‘atol’ (beverage with flour and water or milk) typically delivered in food aid programmes and commercially known as Vitacereal, with a 62% concentration of transgenic products.

REDSSAG received several testimonies from people who are using this ‘atol’ for nutritional recovery of children under 5, reporting that children suffer from dysentery. While it has not been medically proven that these reactions are caused by the consumption of the drink, this is an additional source of concern.

For these reasons REDCASSAN and REDSSAG consider that people’s right to food is being violated by the exposure to transgenics through food aid programmes, and are preparing a complaint together with the affected communities.

In this situation a precautionary principle should be applied. Therefore the European Union, USA and other donors should ensure that GMOs are not used in food aid delivery (e.g. in WFP food aid programmes) nor introduced through any of its aid programmes and should proactively lobby agencies such as the WFP on this issue.

RIGHT TO FOOD AND FOOD AID

“Food Aid has arrived in Guatemala

when we were already in a situation of total danger and extreme vulnerability. There were no preventive actions. The solution was to give a basket of food, but the problem was we did not know how to use this food. How to cook it? The women did not know how to prepare this food they received and felt very sad about it. Furthermore, the taste and consistency were unappealing. I remember that the oil we received was pinkish in colour. The women stared at it and asked: where does this pinkish oil come from? How do you use it? We asked among our neighbours,” said Magdalena Sarat, an indigenous woman and coordinator of CONAVIGUA (Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala). Telling the story of her experience with Food Aid programs in Guatemala, Magdalena Sarat called for the need to incorporate the criteria of: respect for the local culture, sustained responses to emergencies, the promotion of agroecological models of production, and participation in Food Aid policies and programmes at community and local levels. She finished her speech with the declaration that “Food Aid needs an approach sensitive to culture and identity.”

WHAT KIND OF FOOD AID DO WE WANT?

Food Aid should be sent to countries in cash form and rather than food and without imposing any conditionalities. Aid should come in through international cooperation lines that contribute to achieving and protecting the right to food of the people in the situation of vulnerability without discrimination.

Countries need autonomy to decide:

- Where to purchase: only they can make the choice to procure food in the country (in a region not affected by the emergency or the crop failure) or in the sub-region (favouring cross-border trade).
- What food to purchase: transparency in the type of food distributed is essential to ensure health rights and respect for culture and identity.
- From whom to purchase: the use of public procurement as a rural development policy is only possible if countries receive aid in money rather than food. This enables governments to introduce programmes for public procurement from family farmers (including small-scale and peasant farmers, artisan fisheries, afro-

descendants, indigenous peoples and extractivist groups) as Brazil and Ecuador are already doing. These programmes can be expanded if aid comes in money and is based on lessons learned from these two countries.

- Promote sustainable agriculture: By selecting where to buy, from whom to buy and what kind of product to purchase, nation states can use food aid to promote agroecological production by paying a surcharge for socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable products.

Breaking the cycle of dependency on food aid means investing in the country’s agricultural system. Thus, while food aid is necessary and welcomed in cases of emergency (when it follows specific criteria), it is crucial to help the countries that are highly dependent on food aid to promote structural changes in their food production, processing, storage and distribution systems that:

- Prevent vulnerability to emergency situations: reducing the impacts of climate change and increasing the productive system’s resilience;
- Increase the country’s food stocks (enabling the government to regulate prices and respond to emergency situations) through public procurement directed towards small-scale and peasant farming, artisan fisheries, afro-descendants, indigenous peoples and extractivist groups;
- Re-direct state and multilateral investments to promote peasant agriculture and rural development based on socially, culturally and environmentally adapted technologies;
- Promote and respect women’s rights, ensuring their access to and control over land, natural and productive resources that ensure their livelihoods and autonomy in an equitable way;
- Regulate transnational corporations and prioritize the promotion of local and national markets.

1 Humanitarian challenges related to current food trends, OCHA discussion paper, April 2008.

2 Food Price Crisis: A Wake Up Call for New Policies to Eradicate Hunger, Anuradha Mittal.

3 <http://www.wfp.org/english/?ModuleID=137&Key=2777>

4 Thematic Panel: “Food Aid in the Region,” 12th April 2008 at the IPC Conference prior to the 30th FAO Regional Meeting in LAC, organized by Javier Pasquier from More and Better Aid and the International Planning Committee (IPC). CONAVIGUA and ActionAid were invited to make presentations to this panel.

MALAWI Challenges for food security and the engagement of civil society

Introduction: hunger and food production in Malawi

Recently, Malawi became known internationally for its 'miracle' in increasing food production by the introduction of government subsidies for fertilizers and seeds. But despite this miracle, the country still faces major challenges in achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. Malawi is an agriculture-based economy with farming accounting for about 36.4% of GDP. Over 85% of the population lives in rural areas and over 90% of the households in these areas belong to subsistence farmers. Nevertheless, the country has faced serious hunger problems and achieving household food security remains a challenge. Over the last few decades, Malawi has generally run food deficits, relying on food imports and food aid to combat hunger.

"Malawi is in a perpetual state of food emergency. Most farmers don't produce food for more than four months. We are living on the edge, all the time. Addressing the transitory food crisis does not address the underlying problem, which is the low productivity of agriculture" (Devereux 2002)

Government and Civil Society are attempting to meet the challenges of improving agricultural production and promoting food security. Different policies have been implemented to address food supply problems and reduce hunger.

The last two cropping seasons (05/06 and 07/08) have been the best in Malawi for over a decade, producing 2.35 and 3.2 million tonnes respectively in relation to a national demand for 2.2 mt. This massive increase in agricultural production became known as the Malawi Miracle.

In 2005/06, the government decided to invest in agricultural subsidies for fertilizers used in food crops. These subsidies have now been extended to seeds as well, constituting a 'green revolution package' for agriculture. The negative consequences of adopting this model in Asia and Latin America are well known, and its



Farmers of the Bwayaya Cooperative in Malawi

Renata Neder / IFSN / ActionAid

IFSN and FOSANET

The Food Security Advocacy Network (FOSANET) was established in July 2004 and launched on 15th March 2005 as part of the IFSN initiative for creating and strengthening networks to fight for the right to food. Today, 67 organisations and commodity associations are represented in the network. The main activities developed by the network are: Research; Advocacy and lobbying; Capacity building of civil society; and Influencing policy.

implementation as a response to hunger and food crises should take these problems into consideration.

Development work faces many challenges, but it is particularly difficult to tackle the structural and emergency aspects of poverty simultaneously. It is not easy to respond to an emergency or an immediate need while, at the same time, concentrating efforts to change the root causes of poverty and hunger. Here we wish to provide a few examples of fighting hunger on these two fronts.

ActionAid Malawi in the struggle for food security

ActionAid began working in Malawi in 1991 and one of its initial thematic areas was Nutrition and Food Security. At this time, the work was focused on the delivery of basic services and infrastructures, agricultural production, water and sanitation. Msakambewa, in Dowa, was the first DA

with which ActionAid started working in Malawi. The first contacts with farmers followed the same path. Farmers in the DA stressed that the major problems they faced in crop production were low productivity, lack of fertilizers, lack of seeds, drought, floods and land shortages.

ActionAid encouraged communities to plant crops in dry seasons using irrigation and assisted households with the irrigation systems in use, such as head loads, watering cans, treadle pumps canals / furrows, and so on.

Despite the diversity of crops – such as maize, beans, potatoes, cassava, soy beans and tobacco – when it comes to eating habits, people give priority to nsima, a product made from maize flour that forms the basis of the daily diet in rural areas. How to introduce nutritional education and diversify people's recipes while respecting traditional culture is a challenge.

Access to marketing is another essential component for success in agricultural income generating activities and consequently for improving the livelihoods of rural households. It remains a challenge to empower farmers economically to enable them to plan the sale of their crops, in particular maize, in order to wait for a better price rather than sell everything immediately after harvest at low prices. ActionAid has also developed activities in the DA for improving access to loans and marketing agricultural products.

Bwayaya Cooperative

During a meeting with ActionAid, 25 farmers from the Bwayaya Cooperative talked about the challenges for agricultural production and food security. They still experience periods of hunger and the main constraints they identified were low productivity, low market prices and low income. They identified a number of key elements that would help to end their vulnerability and hunger: access to seeds and fertilizers and access to markets and fair prices.

Around 2003, ActionAid turned its work to a rights based approach. It was time to focus at the structural causes of poverty and hunger.

At local level, this meant that some key services would still be delivered, but at the same time, there would be clear focus on empowering communities in order to promote sustainable and long-term changes to the root causes of poverty and hunger.

People must be capacitated to claim their rights and build solutions to ensure their nutrition and food security, improve agricultural production and increase income generation.

In Msakambewa, farmers have organized themselves in eight cooperatives. ActionAid promoted training courses and capacity building activities with them, focusing on enhancing agricultural production and access to market. These cooperatives are now being linked to NASFAM (the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi) and it is expected that this will improve their access to markets and provide better prices, improving their income and livelihoods.

FOSANET and the Right to Food

Another front in the struggle for nutrition and food security is the implementation at national level of the right to food legal framework, assuring the right to food and defining the responsibilities of rights holders and duty bearers. Civil society and social movements have been important actors in this battle. In Malawi, civil society's engagement provides an example of the success of this advocacy work.

Since the advent of multi-party democracy in 1993, Malawi has experienced a substantial growth in civil society organizations. The Malawian government has opened space and invited civil society to participate and

join forces to fight hunger in the country. "The problem of food and hunger in the country was so serious and was such a complex issue that it could not be fully addressed by one single institution or organization. It affected everyone and it was essential to address the issue. So, the government started to open space for civil society engagement and advocacy work and we needed to fill in this space" (Edson Musopole / ActionAid Malawi)

Civil Society Organizations have been engaged in a different process that addresses distinct aspects of rural development (including food security) and policy advocacy.

One important aspect of civil society's engagement in Malawi is its participation in the discussions and drafting of the Land Bill, the Biosafety Bill and the Right to Food Bill.

The Food Security and Advocacy Network (FOSANET) and other national networks and organizations are taking an active part in this process and have already achieved important results. Drafting of the Food and Nutrition Security Bill (FNS or Right to Food Bill) began in 2006. A first draft was ready by December 2006 and review meetings were held throughout 2007. The final draft was ready by 31st October 2007. FOSANET and other organizations were a key part of that the entire process.

This bill, as it currently stands, will be an important step towards ensuring the right to food in the country. It is drafted within a food rights framework and sets out and defines:

- the government's obligation to safeguard the right to food
- the responsibilities of non-state actors
- policies to accelerate realization of the right to food
- the establishment of the nutrition and food security council

The way forward will involve the submission of the FNS Bill to the Ministry of Justice, the Cabinet's approval, its submission to the National Assembly as a government bill and, finally, its enactment. The whole process is expected to be finalized by 2009. Just as important as FOSANET's engagement in the process of implementing the right to food in Malawi is the involvement of the partner and grassroots organizations. One important aspect highlighted by the network is

Promoting high value agricultural production

Total Land Care, a partner organisation founded in 1998 / 1999, implements projects for irrigation, reforestation and market access. Its efforts are focused on promoting high value agricultural production and increasing family income. The rainy season in the region lasts five months and if farming activity remains dependent on rainwater alone, production will be restricted to this period. With irrigation, tomatoes, maize, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, beans and tobacco can be harvested more than once a year.

Access to markets is another key area of the project. Farmers are encouraged to grow high value crops and to sell directly to the markets in Lilongwe, avoiding intermediaries. Farmers in the community also plan in advance the crops each farmer will harvest, so there is continuous market supply.

the need to improve capacity building initiatives in the country. Although the government provided a considerable amount of space for public involvement, very often civil society was insufficiently prepared to fill this space. Identifying this gap, FOSANET started several activities to build capacities and raise awareness of the right to food in order to improve the quality of their and their partners' engagement in the process.

Conclusion

There is still a long way to go in order to achieve household food security in Malawi, including further grassroots empowerment, increasing people's awareness of their right to food, discussion of their eating habits and diversification of their consumption/production, building alliances, networking, campaigning and critical engagement with the government. ActionAid Malawi is helping to address this enormous challenge and make the Malawi miracle more people centred.

R. Phiri, M. Alexander, "Progress and Challenges in Reducing the Number of Hungry People in Malawi in Accordance with the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action", Presentation at the Right to Food Workshop, 24th January 2008, Lilongwe. ActionAid Malawi, "Msakambewa Evaluation Report" Mwenifumbo, Anganile W.A., (Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy) "The food and nutrition security bill: background, progress and the way forward", Presentation at the Right to Food Workshop, 24th January 2008, Lilongwe. FOSANET, Technical Report for 2003.

GHANA Rice and poultry import surges



Gideon Mendel/Corbis/ ActionAid

Policy reform in Ghana since the early 1980s – including Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), tariff changes, agricultural and trade policies, and Ghana/Growth Poverty Reduction Strategies (GPRS) I and II – has resulted in liberalization policies that have led to significant increases in the importation of subsidized cheap agricultural produce. As a contribution to the debate on import surges, ActionAid International and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collaborated to conduct a study on the Extent and impact of agro-import surges in developing countries. ActionAid Ghana has been working on issues around trade liberalisation and its implication for local producers in Ghana because of the apparent hardships it has caused to small scale rural farmers. The broad objective of ActionAid's work was to demonstrate the occurrence of agro-import surges in Ghana, if any, and to assess their impact on development prospects and their effects on the livelihoods of households and communities in terms of food security and poverty alleviation.

Trade liberalisation has led to considerable increases in global trade with benefits accruing mainly to the developed nations, with few or no benefits being received by developing countries such as Ghana. The major reason for this is that trade liberalisation has resulted in higher imports of cheap subsidized products competing with local produce and in most cases displacing the goods sold

by smaller producers, mainly small-scale farmers from their own domestic market. In recent times, import surges have attracted considerable attention in development circles due to large increases in both the volume and value of food imports from the developed world to developing countries. Furthermore, import surges have become a more high-profile issue because of their deleterious effects on agro-industries, family incomes and livelihoods in poor countries, including Ghana. Agricultural subsidies in the developed world are partially to account for overproduction, resulting in surpluses being dumped on the world market. Consequently, small and unsubsidized farmers from developing countries are being squeezed out of the market even in their own countries.

ActionAid Ghana divided the study into two stages. The first stage consisted of Stakeholder Consultations at the community, regional and national levels to determine whether there was any import surge problem, and, if so, which commodity or commodities were involved. These consultations led to the selection of some commodities that have experienced import surges in recent times in Ghana, including rice, poultry (or chicken meat), tomato paste, vegetable oil, and imported beef. ActionAid selected the first two commodities, namely rice and poultry. The second stage of the study involved an analysis of rice and poultry import surges in Ghana and their impacts at both household and community

levels. Selected communities across all regions of the country were visited for consultations and data collection. Regional and national level consultations were also conducted.

Rice Import Surges

Rice imports in the early 1990s amounted to more than 250,000 million tons (mt) annually, but fell to less than 100,000 mt per year in 1996 and 1997, after which they started to rise again. Since 2001, when imports rose above 300,000 mt, rice imports have been consistently high. In contrast, domestic rice production figures have remained around 150,000 mt per year, suggesting that domestic production levels have stagnated over the last decade, while import volumes continue to rise. The relationship between rice import prices and annual import volumes also helps tell us whether there is a rice import surge problem in Ghana. The price per ton for rice imported into Ghana levelled out and even declined in the 1990s and the early 2000s, which may have been one of the factors that encouraged increases in imports during the period. Furthermore, the average price of local rice has been consistently higher than the average price of imported rice, which brings into sharp focus the Ghana rice industry's loss of competitive edge, making the crop unattractive to local producers.

Impoverishment of Rice Producers

The high price of local rice is mostly due to high input costs that farmers cannot afford, resulting in low production and

consequent low earnings. Secondly, the price paid to farmers for rice has been consistently low due to the market being flooded with imports, such that the income levels achieved by farmers with positive returns were rather low. The low price of imported rice led to increases in rice imports, while the relatively high price of local rice meant consumers shifted to cheaper imported rice (albeit not as nutritious). For example, local production from 1994 to 2004 averaged 150,000 metric tons, whereas the average volume of imported rice was about 260,000 metric tons. The net effect of high rice imports has therefore been declining incomes for rice producers with its attendant implications for poverty. As in 2004, falls in the price of imported rice resulted in an increase in the number of local producers who had negative returns (66 percent). The high rice imports in Ghana have negatively affected the levels and stability of incomes obtained from domestic rice production. Consequently, most rice farmers become impoverished.

Food Insecurity

The rice producers' own main source of rice for consumption was traditionally locally produced, and as such the reduction in production implied food insecurity problems for these households. For 84% of households, their own production of rice was consumed within the first three months of harvest. The rather low incomes realized by local rice farmers mean that they also lack the purchasing power to ensure regular access to food all year round. In particular, this study confirmed that rice is both a cash crop and a food crop for local rice producers in Ghana. If farmers have lost cash income from local rice production due to the effect of high rice imports, then they have also lost their purchasing power when their own production fails.

Vulnerable Livelihoods

The study assessed local people's livelihoods in terms of human and social capital and how the latter are affected by high rice imports. Low levels of literacy among local rice producers limit their ability to use information and scientific knowledge to build their capacity to meet their basic needs.

This can be attributed to low levels of incomes and savings resulting from the rather low returns from rice production, since rice is the main cash crop for most of these farmers. Thus the impact of high rice imports is to impoverish the livelihoods of rice producers. In addition, the various Farming Systems Analyses conducted during the study indicate that rice is an important crop for both men and women around which their livelihood activities revolve. Cash income from rice is used to support many livelihood activities, making rice a very important crop for these households. In addition, most households distribute rice as 'a gift' and thereby help the communities build and maintain social cohesion. A threat to the local rice industry is therefore a threat to this important social function.

The rice industry in Ghana has been besieged by imports and requires public intervention to create the enabling environment that will make local rice competitive.

ActionAid supports small-scale farmers and is particularly interested in supporting the rice industry because these farmers grow the crop across all regions of Ghana. The largest quantities of rice (about 60%) come from two out of the three poorest regions in the northern sector of the country, that is, the Upper East and Northern regions. Rice is a major staple in the diet of almost all Ghanaian households, making demand for the crop very high. Rice demand and consumption is increasing at an accelerated pace, making Ghana a net importer of rice.

ActionAid Ghana is therefore keen to promote domestic rice production and consumption in Ghana in order to:

1. create employment and increase incomes in rural areas as a means of reducing poverty
2. ensure access to food as a basic right
3. reduce rural-urban migration, especially of the youth to prevent streetism
4. reduce the country's over-reliance on imported rice to conserve foreign exchange

Poultry Import Surges

An assessment of poultry product imports, focusing in particular on types of chicken meat, shows a steady increase in the volumes imported into the country over the last decade. The

local poultry sector grew from scratch in the late 1950s, reaching its zenith in the late 1980s and began to plummet in the 1990s (Ofei-Nkansa 2004:76). Chicken wings and legs were the initial parts imported in Ghana prior to 1997 but the trend changed in favour of high levels of chicken thigh imports. On the whole, chicken importation has risen steadily since 1995 with chicken thighs dominating and rising by about 1200% between 2000 and 2004. Importation of whole chicken is minimal, however. Estimates based on available data indicate that over 26,000 tonnes of chicken were imported into Ghana in 2002; by 2004, the figure stood at 40,000 tonnes, representing a 53.8% increase in import volumes (FAO 2005). Currently two-thirds of chicken imports into Ghana come from EU countries with Ghana importing over 30% of the total EU exports to West Africa (TWN, 2006, 40). Data shows sharp increases in poultry imports into Ghana from a mere 7,000 metric tonnes in 2001 to 45,000 metric tonnes in 2006, while local production was estimated at around 22,000 metric tonnes. The scenario that makes Ghana the highest importer of EU chicken in the West African sub-region has put local poultry producers at a disadvantage.

Poultry imports more than doubled in 2000 when the special import tax was removed. Local production in 1992 had a hatchery capacity of 20-25 million birds per year, out of which about 15-20 million were broilers. Imports were minimal. By 2004 local production had shrunk to around 11% of imports (FAO 2005).

I am Iddrisu Neidow, 52 years old and a rice farmer in Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. I have been farming for 32 years. My parents used to farm rice to provide for our education and the family's other social needs when we were young. I took to farming since 1975, like my parents, to be able to support my own education and that of my younger ones. This worked well until the markets became flooded with imported rice. Today, imported rice has flooded the Ghanaian markets, making it difficult for local rice to be marketed. Now life is unbearable because our income from rice cannot support the family's education and other social needs.

The Socioeconomic Significance of the Poultry Industry in Ghana

Due to increased imports, the demand for local poultry has collapsed and jeopardised the livelihoods of more than 400,000 registered commercial poultry farmers in the country, in addition to the many small-scale producers. According to ActionAid Ghana's study, Ghanaian poultry farmers in 1992 were supplying 95% of poultry products to the Ghanaian market, but by 2001 their market share had declined to 11%.

The main actors in the industry include producers, feed producers, distributors, extension and veterinary service providers. Poultry farmers are found across the length and breadth of the country with commercial producers concentrated more in specific areas like the Accra, Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions. Nevertheless, smallholder producers, who constitute approximately 70% of poultry farmers, are predominantly women living in rural and peri-urban communities of the country who keep poultry as a socioeconomic safety net.

The poultry industry in Ghana has a multiplier effect and supports a number of other enterprises. However, with the collapse of the poultry industry, the number of other small-scale producers has gone down and the businesses of the affluent have soared. Commercial poultry producers absorb a large chunk (about 25%) of the local maize produced in the country, thereby providing employment and a ready market for thousands of maize producers. In the year 2002, the entire productive capacity of the major poultry farms across the country was a mere 27%.

One of the effects of the unfair competition from highly subsidised poultry imports is the wasteful under-utilisation of poultry facilities in the country: utilization of hatcheries stands at 25%, feed mills at 42% and processing plants at 25%. Production of day-old chicks has also been on the decline. The storage share of imported poultry and beef products in 10 of the cold stores is approximately 85%; the remaining 15% is used for local fish and other meat products. The survey found very little frozen local chicken in any of the cold stores visited.

The cold stores revealed several hundred cartons of frozen chicken

parts from Europe and Brazil, beef innards from Argentina and lamb parts from New Zealand. Operators of the cold stores are key businesspeople experiencing high profit margins as a result of the cheap imports of chicken parts of little market value in the EU. The importers of frozen chicken include politically influential men, some of whom have acknowledged a conflict of interest in the attempts to push through food safety legislation that would restrict the importation of chicken meat of a certain quality. Poultry production has been a key source of family income and a regular source of protein for both low and middle-income households in both rural and urban parts of the country.

During the last two decades, trade and investment liberalization have comprised the core areas of policy reform in Ghana. The policy framework for prevailing trade rules and practices has by and large been an outcome of a combination of the Lome Convention and the Cotonou preferences; the IMF/WB conditionalities under SAP; the multilateral rules emanating from WTO negotiations; the ECOWAS trade negotiations and national trade and agricultural policies. There is virtually no support from the government and prices are falling, making farmers poorer.

ActionAid Ghana's interest in poultry farming recognizes the potential of its multiplier effect and the involvement of small-scale farmers, basically women, who produce the bulk of poultry and are also involved in producing ingredients (fish, maize, etc.) for feed preparation. In the Upper East Region of Ghana, women rear poultry as a strategy for ensuring food security during the lean season. Perennial food shortages often compel rural women to use domestic poultry to cushion the effects of household food insecurity. This is done through the exchange of hens, guinea fowls, ducks and turkeys for grains and legumes or for outright sale in the market for money - which is then used for household purchases. Consequently, any switch in patronage or reduction in the demand for rural poultry because of the influx of chicken imports poses a major threat to the livelihoods of many vulnerable groups.

The Way Ahead: Putting Food and Livelihood security on the trade agenda

Based on the negative impact of the agro-import surge on small-scale farmers who form the bulk of producers in Ghana, ActionAid makes the following recommendations:

1. The Ghana government should recognise the centrality of food and livelihood security for rural development, poverty reduction and fundamental human rights and join forces with G-33 in the quest for rules that ensure the right of developing countries to protection on the grounds of food security, livelihoods and rural development, in conformity with Doha Rounds.
2. Ghana should exercise its sovereign right to develop national policies that ensure people's rights, rather than allow its policy decisions to be dictated by international financial institutions or so-called development partners.
3. At domestic level, the Ghana government should establish a regulatory environment that offers a competitive edge to local rice and poultry producers through the legitimate resort to tariffs.
4. The government must increase tariffs or impose levies on imported food items, and the funds acquired be used to support local farmers.

Recommendations to ECOWAS:

1. Work to counteract divisive tendencies emerging within the ranks of ECOWAS as a result of the EC's negotiation tactics around the EPA.
2. Provide specific clauses for safeguard mechanisms within the regional trade agreement among ECOWAS countries that enable effective responses to import surges.
3. Ensure that the negotiation of Common External Tariff is based on a clear appreciation of the products that are critical to food and livelihood security and to rural development in individual countries and the region as a whole.
4. Work towards the implementation of ECOWAAP in a way that promotes the integrated industrial development of the sub-region, based on a common industrial strategy.
5. Negotiations at the multilateral level in support of the food and livelihood security of small-scale farmers and of rural development and poverty eradication in the country, rather than corporate interests.



Paul Bigland/ ActionAid

TANZANIA Can we have a bit of that growth? An experience of ActionAid in the fight for the right to food

Tanzania's agricultural production has grown at significant rates in recent decades. From 2.9% in the 1970's and 2.1% in the 1980s, agricultural growth over the two past decades has achieved an average of 3.6% (in the 1990s) and 4.1% in 2006. The farming sector in Tanzania accounts for about 50% GDP, which in turn has dropped from 6.7% in 2005 to 6.2% in 2006.¹ This slight decline was due to the severe droughts that hit the country during the 2005/2006 rainy season.

Tanzania has a Global Hunger Index of 26.13, which means the country faces an alarming hunger situation.

At the same time, rural poverty and food insecurity have increased in this country where sales of agricultural products now account for more than 70% of rural household income in a country where more than 80% of the population depends on farming for their livelihoods and about 0.7% produce cashew nuts as their main cash crop. So why are the people producing these crops not getting a fair share of this growth? ActionAid has been working in Tanzania since 1998, promoting food security with farmers from 9 districts. These farmers are organized in 9 Community Based Organisations (APEXs) that comprise 72,366 members (35%

women) organized into a three-tier structure of village, ward and district levels.

ActionAid's support has followed two main lines: I) Improving Farming Systems and II) Mobilizing and Strengthening farmers and their organizations to negotiate with both government and market actors concerning their rights as producers and suppliers of food. Capacity development of the APEXs has therefore been one of the major preoccupations of the Country Programme in Tanzania. This aim in mind, emphasis was given to facilitating the election of CBO leaders at the village, ward and district levels of the APEX structure, training leaders in organizational management and leadership, drafting by-laws, providing back-up support and following up on their registration with the local government. APEX organizations combine village and ward levels to form district-level organizations. This has enabled farmers to organize themselves and voice their concerns about their rights, including the right to food.

Farmers, through their local districts organizations – including TAFa, NEFA, LIFA, MCAFADA, BACAFADA, KANYOVU, KIPAFADA, PESEFA and ZACPO – and ActionAid's support,

have managed to gain access to information on various matters relating to the farming industry in Tanzania, and been able to adopt appropriate technologies and effective mechanisms for dissemination, introduce information sharing, as well as gain a thorough understanding of the implications of modern farming techniques, so as to avoid poor yields, poor storage, and over-limited markets.

Tanzania is the world's sixth largest producer of cashew nuts and more than 280,000 of the country's population depend on this commodity as the basis of their livelihoods. Women are primarily responsible for producing and processing the crop in this country.

Cashews are one of the most important crops for farmers' incomes in Tanzania, rating eleventh on the ranking of the income generated by the country in 2005, according to FAO.

Rank	Commodity	Production (Int \$1000)	Production (MT)
1	Vietnam	543,364	827,000
2	India	302,234	460,000
3	Brazil	165,091	251,268
4	Nigeria	139,947	213,000
5	Indonesia	80,158	122,000
6	Tanzania, United Rep of	65,703	100,000

ActionAid has been working with cashew nut producers since 2002, a time when these producers received only US\$ 2 per kilo, enough to buy 2 kg of rice, which forms the basis of their everyday diet. Farmers' organizations had no access to decision-making forums on cashew policy and were mere price takers.

Through the work developed with farmers' organizations on building alliances, mobilization and capacity building, as well as lobbying and advocacy, the cashew nut producers today receive US\$ 5 (enough to buy 5 kg of rice) and have become price makers.

But how did this change come about?

Before ActionAid Tanzania and their partner organizations intervened in the districts, farmers were exploited by the buyers: sometimes buyers intentionally delayed buying farmers' crops in order to make farmers more vulnerable and hence forced to accept lower prices due to the large quantity and low quality – and because they had no other alternative markets to sell their produce.

Taking this reality into account, ActionAid Tanzania mobilized farmers and their organizations to acquire a common voice regarding the value of their products and to pressure for the government to introduce policies to support farmers in their negotiations with buyers and traders.

ActionAid Tanzania's work involved negotiating with local and district government representatives to convince them of the need to recognize the voices of farmers as an essential element in local and district development. A crucial aspect of this lobbying and advocacy work involved persuading the governments of the importance of including these key stakeholders in the government decision-making forums. It allowed farmers representatives from the 9 apex organizations to attend these forums where the state and private sectors are also present.

Through lobbying and advocacy work at national level, the government introduced new trade legislation and forced traders to adhere to these new regulations. 2006 saw the Government of Tanzania – at national, regional and district levels – take effective actions

Rank	Commodity	Production (Int \$1000)	Production (MT)
1	Indigenous Cattle Meat	510,272	246,713
2	Cassava	504,420	7,000,000
3	Maize	375,326	3,230,000
4	Cow Milk, Whole, Fresh	223,390	840,000
5	Vegetables Fresh nes	179,206	955,000
6	Rice, Paddy	144,847	680,000
7	Plantains	133,086	600,000
8	Beans, Dry	126,341	290,000
9	Sorghum	97,592	800,000
10	Sweet Potatoes	97,475	970,000
11	Cashew Nuts	65,703	100,000

<http://www.fao.org/es/ess/top/country.html;jsessionid=F6076C33F1EC2E148A03B40D56500B90?lang=en&country=215&year=2005>

to ensure that there was free and fair trading between buyers and farmers. Meanwhile the Regional Commission and other Government officials implemented strategies for effectively controlling and supervising the trading of the 2006/2007 cashew nut harvest, with the aim of ensuring that farmers received a fair price.

During the 2007/2008 financial year, the government supported the construction of a warehouse for cashew nut farmers in the country's southern zone to help mitigate the problem of low prices. This warehouse allows farmers to store their cashew nuts. At the same time, the government supported the farmers' cooperative society.

Farmers' organizations through their representatives frequently monitor buyers to ensure that they are purchasing in accordance with the agreed rate. Farmers are also trying to discuss with the government the need to improve the 'Cashew nut input fund' – implemented by the government to promote cashew nut farming, targeted specifically at smallholder farmers – since the funds have proven inadequate and unreliable.

By lobbying and advocating for a fair price policy from the government, farmers managed to achieve their goal. Cashew nut farmers have secured a seat in the district and regional government decision-making forums,

obtained shifts in the existing power relations, forced changes to government policy practices, influenced the use of the cashew nut input fund and acquired a strong negotiating power for better prices – all now a daily reality.

This has been achieved by empowering farmer, a process facilitated and promoted by ActionAid Tanzania. Farmers have been mobilized to know their rights and demand them through appropriate bodies, engaging in lobbying and advocacy activities that have forced local government leaders to recognize the role of farmers and their contribution to the development process.

The 2006 price setting meeting erased the image of farmers as a group weakened by their poverty and the need to fight for their own survival. Instead, they have come to the fore as a strong collective force, and as the owners of cashew crops, they have the mandate to decide the price at which their commodity should be sold. Cashew nut producers now receive 5 kg of rice in exchange for 1 kg of cashew nuts, a great improvement when compared to the former 2 kg of rice received per kilo of nuts. These are the results of ActionAid International's Food Rights work in Tanzania and the empowerment of farmers' organizations.

Social Technologies

Learning from local communities

Social Technologies (STs) arose from the need to approach social inclusion from a technological viewpoint capable of counterbalancing the dominant model of producing innovation, which is based on an economic rationale. This therefore meant finding other solutions that value non-scientific knowledge.² Most conventional technologies have been conceived and developed in the North with little (or no) influence from communities and/or from the academic and scientific fields in the South. As a result, we may be wasting a wide range of social and technological experiences.³ Social Technologies and their transformative potential have emerged in the context of these alternative experiences, creating virtuous circles of development that can lead to social emancipation and showing that it is possible for innovation and technology to work in favour of the general interest of societies. The term 'Social Technologies' has been used in Brazil⁴ since 2001 but other terms are also used to describe alternative approaches to technological innovation. For example, in India the term 'Grassroots Innovations'⁵ has been used for a number of years; and FAO has also promoted various alternative approaches under the name of 'Proven Technologies' and 'Good Agricultural Practices.'⁶

What are Social Technologies?

Social Technologies (STs) can be defined as "a set of techniques, transforming methodologies, developed and/or applied in interaction with populations and adopted by them, which represent solutions for social inclusion and the improvement of livelihoods."⁷ They are mainly characterised by their simplicity, low costs and simple implementation, based on local resources and on available labour. As a result, these technologies contribute to the generation of income and employment, as well as promoting an improvement in the quality

of life for communities through local development processes. In general, STs are the result of popular knowledge and wisdom, although they may also arise from interactions between popular and scientific knowledge. STs involve different spheres such as health, food, education, housing, work, and income generation. Hence the focal point is that they are social constructions with particular characteristics, created by the environment in which they are developed, fostering social emancipation with positive economic, social and environmental impacts, etc.

The relevance and usefulness of STs can only reach those who really need them if they are given adequate visibility and are appropriately disseminated and reapplied. Furthermore, the reapplication stage is probably the most important, since here additional information is required. It is important to emphasize that reapplying technologies does not mean

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES:

- **Mainly adapted to low-income small producers and consumers;**
- **Rejecting control, segmentation, hierarchy and domination in labour relations;**
- **Internal market-oriented;**
- **Promoting the potential and creativity of producers and users;**
- **Provide economic benefits for small business ventures such as popular cooperatives, incubators and small enterprises;**
- **Mostly multifunctional and suited to solving more than one problem at low cost.**

transferring them from one place to another, even if the problem that led to the development of a particular ST is the same in both places, since in practice the solution developed in the original community may not work in another. However, the available information on these problems is still largely scattered in isolated form among the organisations and communities that develop STs, meaning that for now they only represent partial solutions. An adequate systematisation and dissemination process needs to be implemented, one which enables the reapplication of these technologies



Carmen Lahoz/IEH 2008

Nut production in Mozambique

at a larger scale. This could be done by adopting corresponding public policies.

How can Social Technologies promote Sustainable Food Security?

The need to guarantee access to and availability of adequate food, based on healthy food habits that respect cultural diversity and environment preservation, reveals the multidimensional and intersectoral nature of the food security issue. Several significant factors contribute to aggravating hunger and poverty such as the lack of access to resources and/or the inability to transform these resources into capital assets.⁸ As mentioned above, since STs involve a range of different spheres, they can help promote food security, given that the latter also depends on a set of varied and interconnected factors in several areas. In essence, through their 'inter-linkages' (backward and forward linkages), STs enable the interconnection of diverse productive structures within specific local economies. These linkages connect various productive and value chains in a sustainable process of emancipation.

Hegemonic technological patterns have promoted social exclusion and aggravated hunger. In response, STs can help change this scenario by involving people and transferring their knowledge, experiences and innovations to other populations. For this to occur, the social construction of STs must include several key-actors – communities, social movements and organisations, policy-makers, scientific community and so on – in the processes of development and

dissemination processes. Although the need to introduce urgent public policies is widely recognised, the focal point of these policies must be the sustainability of processes capable of generating employment and income for the communities themselves, creating virtuous circles of development and ensuring the fulfilment of the right to food.

Potential Use of Social Technologies to Mitigate Climate Change

Discussions of the problems arising from *climate change* have become part of the contemporary political agenda due to the increasing evidence of the scope of their negative impacts. There is an urgent need to find and implement alternatives that may diminish the consequences of climate change, fight its causes and help people to adapt to new climate patterns. In particular, climate change poses serious risks to the food security of poor farmers – the part of the population suffering most from hunger and food insecurity. Poor farmers are the most affected group for three main reasons: i) the majority of these farmers live in areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the impacts of climate change are and will be most intensely felt; ii) they are less prepared to confront the effects of this change since they have limited access to resources, lower incomes and limited social protection, making them less able to face this scenario; and iii) these farmers are usually dependent on rainfed agriculture, which is the food production system most affected by climatic changes.

It is possible to identify at least one main way in which STs can contribute to mitigating climate change: namely by providing alternatives that can help poor farmers to adapt to and overcome these changes. We believe that the most significant examples are those STs that provide water harvesting and management, which can contribute decisively to lessening the effects of climate change for poor farmers.⁹ Besides water harvesting and storage, other STs include simple and low-cost irrigation methods adapted to smallholder farmers who are unable to face prolonged droughts. Prolonged droughts also have serious consequences in terms of water for human and animal consumption. Some STs, such as the low-cost solar desalters, contribute to collecting water for these purposes. The use of alternative energy sources in STs also contribute to diminishing the impacts of climate change.

The IEH/ActionAid Social Technologies Initiative

ActionAid's Territorial Development Initiative uses a farmer-to-farmer methodology and involves a survey of social technologies. IEH, ActionAid's partner in various initiatives related to food rights, has been trying to gather and disseminate information on STs that promote food security. Taking into account both these initiatives, ActionAid proposed a partnership between the two organisations with the following objectives: firstly, to raise awareness and promote the discussion on STs; and secondly, to encourage exchanges of information and experiences among organisations and communities in order to facilitate a common search for alternatives to particular problems. This partnership will profit from the participation of the International Food Security Network (IFSN), which comprises more than 500 organisations in 23 national and sub-regional networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America (see www.ifsn-actionaid.net).

The main activities comprise the identification and selection of relevant information on STs, and the identification of organisations and communities that already have some experience with STs and which intend to share their knowledge with others, contributing to a joint search for alternatives. With this aim in mind, we are launching two on-line tools, available both on the IEH website (www.ieham.org) and the IFSN website (www.actionaid-ifsan.net): a **Thematic Library**, where useful information for disseminating STs is organised and made available, and a **Discussion Forum** for promoting contact and sharing opinions between organisations and individuals interested in STs. The success of this initiative depends on the participation of all those involved, so that we can jointly identify and disseminate successful experiences that will be useful for various regions and communities.

SOME EXAMPLES OF STS

Some STs introduce small innovations that significantly improve the productive processes of communities (such as the **Pedal Pump for Irrigation**). Other STs introduce methodologies or processes that guarantee a better community organisation in dealing with products that have a significant aggregate value (such as **Socio-Participatory Certification**). Another group consists of small equipment or appliances that enable food conservation or access to clean water (such as **Solar Dryers** or **Solar Desalters**), or direct access by populations to fresh chemical-free food (such as **Community Gardens**). Moreover, these technologies can also be combined with various social programmes connected to food supply, distribution and commercialisation, and to food and nutrition education. There are also examples of STs that led to the development of public policies in some Southern countries thanks to the involvement of social organisations. Examples from Brazil include the adoption of **multi-mixture** (a food supplement for combating malnutrition) as a food security policy, or the construction of **cisterns for rainwater storage** which supply the Brazilian semi-arid region during droughts and which have been used traditionally in the Northeast for a long time

1 The *Hunger Studies Institute* (IEH) is an independent, non-profit organisation, which seeks to fight hunger and which congregates researchers, teachers and technicians from Southern and European countries (www.ieham.org). This article is based on a conceptual paper prepared by the IEH for ActionAid.

2 SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *Semear outras soluções: os caminhos da biodiversidade e dos conhecimentos rivais*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2004.

3 SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2000.

4 For further information on the Brazilian experience of Social Technologies, please visit the *Social Technologies Network* (www.rts.org.br) or the *Institute of Social Technology* (www.itsbrasil.org.br).

5 Information on 'Grassroots Technologies' from India can be obtained, for example, from the *Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network* (www.gian.org), the *National Innovation Foundation* (www.nifindia.org), the *Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions* – SRISTI (www.sristi.org) or the *Honey Bee Network* (<http://knownetgrin.honeybee.org/honeybee.htm>).

6 For further information on 'Proven Technologies' and 'Good Agricultural Practices,' please consult the FAO initiatives *TECA* (www.fao.org/sd/teca/index_en.asp) and *GAP* (www.fao.org/prods/GAP/index_en.htm), respectively.

7 INSTITUTO DE TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL. "Reflexões sobre a construção do conceito de tecnologia social". In: *Tecnologia Social: uma estratégia de desenvolvimento*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Banco do Brasil, 2004.

8 We understand the various types of capital assets as: **Produced capital**: material resources, such as production assets and financial resources; **Natural capital**: natural resources such as land, water, biodiversity, etc.; **Human capital**: education, health, nutritional status, etc.; **Cultural Capital**: sets of practices, customs, beliefs, values, habits; **Social capital**: norms and networks that facilitate collective action and mutual benefits. (Taken from BEBBINGTON, A. *Capitals and Capabilities: a framework to analyzing peasant viability, rural livelihoods and poverty in the Andes*. London: IIED.DFID, January 1999).

9 According to the *Human Development Report* (2006), agriculture, and consequently food production, will be the sector most affected by these problems. In some regions, the variation in rainfall patterns and decline in water availability will reduce crop yields by 25% or more by 2050. Global undernourishment will increase from 15% to 26%, meaning that 75 to 125 million people will potentially suffer from this problem by 2080.

Biofuels and Food Security: questions towards a critical debate

The biofuel agenda has simultaneously come to the fore in the countries of the North (consumers) and the South (producers). In the former, debate has mostly focused on the adoption of 'renewable' energies, allowing developed countries to demonstrate their commitment to mitigating climate changes through the adoption of compulsory targets for gradually mixing biofuels to road transport fuels and reducing emissions of the fossil fuels responsible for the greenhouse effect and global warming, thereby meeting the targets of the Kyoto Protocol. Meanwhile, for tropical agro-exporter countries, biofuels are being promoted as a 'rural development' strategy institutionally supported by international bodies such as the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and the World Bank, as well as being backed by specific regional strategies; in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially by the IICA (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture) and the IADB (Inter-American Development Bank). Globally, the debate has generally fostered the view that a new and promising international market in agroenergy will redefine world farming production and trade for the foreseeable future.

However, while the production of biofuels has indeed been rapidly redefining the reality of the rural world and farming in various countries, it is essential that this debate includes an understanding of the implications for the right to food and how the issue of promoting the right to food has now become inseparable from the energy issue.



Sugar cane production in Kenya

Thierry Gengen/ Panos Pictures/ ActionAid

In order to comprehend what the 'biofuel fever' really implies, it is crucial that we look rigorously at the question of food security. Although biofuels have been promoted under a number of guises (as an opportunity for rural development, a 'clean' alternative energy source in the context of climate changes, promotion of trade as a solution to environmental problems, and so on), the central point is that the era of 'agroenergy' (energy obtained from biomass grown for this purpose) unquestionably implies competition and increasing demand for the same structural resources that guarantee the global population's access to adequate food: namely, arable land and water. In addition, adequate food, especially in Southern countries, is conditioned by the access to land to produce foods. Although this is still an open issue, but one which must be prioritized in the current pressure on land occupation and purchase for the production of energy.

ELEMENTS TOWARDS A CRITICAL DEBATE

Criticism from environmentalists concerning the effectiveness of biofuels in mitigating climate changes – which is after all supposedly their main aim – has already become widespread and fairly damning. We can highlight the

studies released at the start of 2008¹ demonstrating that biofuels may in fact worsen global warming, including the calculations for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the so-called 'energy balance' (that is, how much 'clean' energy these fuels may generate compared to how much fossil fuel energy needs to be used to produce them) in the evaluation of the fuel's life-cycle, as well as the environmental impacts of converting vast arable areas to producing biofuel crops, a trend which has led to an explosion in deforestation.²

Likewise, there is also strong evidence supporting the critical evaluation, raised from the outset, of the likely negative impact of biofuels on food security.

The production of biofuels is already reflected in the high price of foods.

Initially suspected as a potential problem, this correlation is now an incontestable fact with concrete effects. According to FAO³, the price of farm commodities soared in 2007: the FAO global price index (composed of more than 60 internationally traded products) rose 23% in 2007 compared to 2006, a year in which prices rose 9% compared to 2005; the document also points out that 40 countries face food shortages for reasons that include "climate changes, increased consumption of meat, loss

of harvests, wars, and the use of food crops for the production of biofuels.”

The report also records social unrest in relation to food issues in Morocco, Uzbekistan, Senegal and Mexico in 2007.

The international biofuel trade is already threatening food security

Since the agricultural production of commodities functions is directly linked to international prices, a particular situation in one country generates effects on the whole system, meaning that the high prices for farm products caused by the increasing use of biofuels has had a negative impact on countries of the South.

In the so-called ‘tortilla crisis’ in January 2007, when Mexico – tied to agricultural imports from the US due to NAFTA – saw the price of its main food product rise 40% following the use of maize to manufacture more lucrative ethanol in the US. One effect of the priority given by the US to supplying its own needs, ensuring its food and energy security, was to cause supply shortfalls and inflation in those countries dependent on its exports. Other countries were able to exploit the favourable situation and sell maize to the US, which also led to scarcity and high prices at home. In addition, the high prices of products like maize (for ethanol) and soya (for biodiesel) has indirect systemic effects. In the United States, for example, the forecast for 2008 (with the largest area of planted farmland in the country since the Second World War) is that 30% of maize production will go to produce ethanol. As well as the use of crops for energy taking up a growing proportion of overall production, the high prices for maize end up permeating the entire industrialized food chain: from breakfast cereals, to maize glucose used for sweeteners and as a component in animal feeds, meaning that the maize prices also affect costs and consumer prices for the entire chain of meats, eggs and dairy produce.⁴ Elsewhere, the high prices of cooking oil in Asia, mainly due to exportations of palm oil to the European Union to manufacture biodiesel, have had a dramatic impact on the total

“Global social movements, especially those from Southern countries, made themselves heard at the Nyeleni 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty. Held in Mali, Africa, more than 600 participants from various parts of the world met at the Forum to celebrate a decade fighting for the right of people to produce their own food and decide their own food policies. Social movements and civil society organizations, including peasants, environmental organizations, consumer networks and so on, agreed that the ‘biofuels’ produced from industrial monocrops controlled by corporations should be called ‘agrofuels,’ highlighting their connection with agribusiness and multinational ownership.”

calories consumed by the majority of the Southern population living on this continent. In this unequal dispute, the poor and hungry population has no means of competing with cars and the price that rich countries can pay to transform food crops into fuel. Foreseeing the global scale of these effects, in 2007 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, requested a global five-year moratorium on the production of biofuels from food species, until the technology becomes available to produce biofuels from cellulose biomass, including grasses and waste products from farming and forestry.

A DEBATE FILLED WITH CONTRADICTIONS

As well as the now indisputable evidence concerning the negative impacts of biofuels, we can highlight some of the more evident contradictions involved in their production, which tend to exacerbate the negative consequences of biofuels for food security:

Industrialized farming is petro-dependent

The backdrop to the global interest in biofuels is the apparent depletion in oil reserves and other fossil fuel energy resources (natural gas and coal). As well as the fact that existing reserves are approaching or have already reached peak production, it is increasingly more expensive and difficult to access these reserves, meaning that more energy is needed to extract and transport a barrel of oil than the energy it provides. The current world agrifood system is a petro-intensive industrial model –from its dependency on chemical inputs and mechanization, to processing, storage

and distribution – that involves a large external energy input at ever higher costs. In other words, the priority should be to convert food production in a systematic and effective form, breaking the current dependency on fossil fuel inputs by strengthening local productive systems, based on organic principles and self-sufficiency in foods, fibres and energy.

The current world agrifood system is verging on collapse

A central element of the distortions in the globalized food system – one posing an increasingly palpable threat to food security – is the cost of so-called ‘food miles,’ that is, the amount of energy units consumed in transporting food around the world from the regions where they are produced to the locations where they will be consumed. Here we have to factor in the effect of transportation costs on the final prices and the accessibility of foods, as well as the impact of the fuel consumption (and the total polluting emissions) involved in road transportation, grain (and soya) shipments around the world,



Barry Lewis/ Corbis/ ActionAid

and even air transportation. Given the irreversible trend towards oil scarcity and higher prices, the relocalization of food production is an urgent measure if we are to ensure a safe transition to the post-oil economy and farming, based on ensuring global food security.

Agriculture has a fundamental role to play in responding to the challenges posed by climate changes. Going far beyond the cosmetic changes suggested by the addition of biofuels to car fuels in rich countries, coordinated efforts need to be made towards converting industrial farming practices to local systems that are self-sufficient in the production and distribution of foods and energy, thereby eliminating the contradictions of the petro-dependent system – set to be deepened by the industrial production of biofuels – that threaten the food security of much of the world's population.

1 Among others: Timothy SEARCHINGER, Ralph HEIMLICH, R. A. HOUGHTON, Fengxia DONG, Amani ELOBEID, Jacinto FABIOSA, Simla TOKGOZ, Dermot HAYES, Tun-Hsiang YU, "Use of U.S. Croplands for Biofuels Increases Greenhouse Gases Through Emissions from Land-Use Change", . *Science* 29 February 2008: Vol. 319. no. 5867, pp. 1238 – 1240.

2 See *Agrofuels - Towards a reality check in nine key areas*, by Biofuelwatch, Transnational Institute, et al. July 2007. At: <http://www.carbontradedewatch.org/pubs/Agrofuels.pdf>; SCHLESINGER, S. & ORTIZ, L. *Agronegocio e Biocombustíveis: Uma Mistura Explosiva – Impactos da expansão das monoculturas na produção de bioenergia no Brasil*. FBOMS, 2006. At: http://www.natbrasil.org.br/Docs/biocombustiveis/biocomb_ing.pdf .

3 *FAO Food Outlook 2007*. September 2007 represented a peak of 37% (compared to the same period in the previous year). At: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/ah876e/ah876e13.htm>.

4 In 2007 the high prices of grains and energy contributed to the high prices of foods in the USA, which rose 4% in one year, more than the average inflation in consumer prices. The forecast for this year is an increase of 3.5% to 4.5%, due to energy costs. US Department of Agriculture, updated 26 March, 2008. At: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/CPIFoodAndExpenditures/>.



Jenny Matthews/ ActionAid

Sugar cane production in Kenya

MOP 4 and COP 9

4th Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 9th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity
Bonn, Germany: 12-16 and 19-30 May. Info at: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

FAO

International Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy
Rome, Italy: 3-5 May. Info at: <http://www.fao.org/foodclimate/>

International Conference on Biofuels

São Paulo, Brazil: 17-21 November, Info at: <http://www.mre.gov.br>

All these events will also involve civil society mobilizations and forums running in parallel.

actionaid Hunger FREE Women

Support women farmers and producers.

Women are the main producers of food in most developing countries, yet they have less access to extension services, labour, credit and fertilizer than men do. **Farm plots run by women** have been found to have 20–40% lower yields than those run by men, but these differences actually arise from inequalities in agricultural inputs. **When women receive** the same levels of education, experience, and farm inputs as men, they can increase the yields of some crops by over 20%. **Lack of secure tenure rights** in land bars women from membership of cooperatives, water users groups, and farmer associations; prevents them from accessing credit; and discourages them from investing time and resources in sustainable farming practices. **Both crop yields and household food security** will improve if women can choose what to grow on their own plots of land. **Women's access to and control over land, seeds, water, credit and extension services** should be increased through redistribution and tenure reforms at national level.

Take action now for the right to food!

www.hungerfreeplanet.org

Contact

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and injustice together.

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