



Food security

An SDC global programme



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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Why food security is a key issue for the SDC

Today, some 800 million people around the world are undernourished. Two billion people are malnourished (hidden hunger).

- ▶ Alleviating hunger and ensuring equitable access to healthy and balanced nutrition are a major challenge for the international community and a priority goal for the SDC.

In Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, 80% of agricultural land is cultivated by smallholder family farms. Smallholder farms are, therefore, the most important food producers.

- ▶ The world's population is growing steadily and dietary habits are changing. Smallholder farmers are an important driving force for employment and rural development in most of the world's regions.

The rural population in developing countries is most affected by shortages in the supply of healthy foods.

- ▶ Smallholder farms suffer particularly frequently from crop failures and crop losses. Support for ecological and diversified agricultural production systems promotes the resilience of agricultural production and of households that depend on it.

Access to land and the sustainable use of natural resources like soil and water are imperative for agricultural production.

- ▶ Regulated access to land and sustainable use of natural resources are the foundations of food security.

Consumers want food prices to be as low as possible but farmers expect to earn a stable and secure income for their work.

- ▶ Market price fluctuations can trigger political and social unrest and prevent long-term investment in sustainable production.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This

definition encompasses both an adequate level of dietary energy intake (measured in kilocalories per person) and a balanced and nutritious diet that provides the necessary vitamins and micronutrients. Food security rests on four pillars: availability, access, use and stability.

Global Programme on Food Security

The challenge of food security can only be met through a participatory approach involving all organisations and groups concerned. The SDC's Global Programme Food Security has four areas of action:

- ▶ The Global Programme represents Switzerland's position on smallholder farming and food security in international institutions, international organisations and networks. Switzerland also funds, guides and manages projects with new approaches. The Global Programme works together with the following main partners:

- » CGIAR Global Agricultural Research Partnership
- » International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- » United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- » UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

- ▶ The Global Programme provides support and expertise to the Swiss federal offices, Swiss relief organisations and private stakeholders. It thereby strengthens Switzerland's efforts on behalf of global food security and nutrition and ensures policy coherence in this area.

- ▶ The Global Programme promotes knowledge management within the SDC and disseminates information about research findings and current strategic discussions.
- ▶ The Global Programme raises public awareness of the global challenge of food security. It works with institutions and companies to increase commitments.



“Instead of measuring the extent of crop damage, we wanted to see if there was a way of preventing it and helping farmers make the right decisions.”

Hanspeter Liniger,
Centre for Development and
Environment, University Bern

The four components of the Global Programme Food Security

Both the UN Millennium Development Goals and the 2030-Agenda for Sustainable Development place a strong emphasis on agriculture and food security. These are also priority themes of Swiss development cooperation work. On this basis, the SDC pursues the following vision:

A world without hunger

The Global Programme Food Security is striving for a world without hunger and undernutrition – a world in which smallholder farmers ensure healthy food and balanced nutrition for all, increase their income by selling their agricultural products and protect the environment.



Sustainable agricultural production and innovation

Innovation is necessary to enable smallholder farmers to produce more food on limited land. The Global Food Programme promotes practice-oriented agricultural research and rural advisory services. Farmers benefit from new plant protection measures and better access to markets. Sustainable, diversified production methods improve their food security and their ability to respond to environmental disasters and crises.



Ensuring access to natural resources

Secure access to land, forests and water is imperative for food security and poverty alleviation. The Global Programme promotes the development, recognition and monitoring of land use rights for small producers. It works to ensure a more careful use of land to prevent desertification and to protect natural resources.



Access to sufficient food and balanced nutrition

The right to food and balanced nutrition is a human right. Thus even a small rise in food prices can have serious consequences: In Switzerland, households spend about 8–10% of their budget on food; in developing countries they often spend more than 50%. The Global Programme works to ensure access to sufficient food and balanced nutrition for all and for women and children in particular. Another important goal of the Global Programme is to reduce post-harvest losses by means of improved harvesting, processing and storage methods.



Broad-based standards

Tackling global problems requires effective international institutions. The Global Programme works within such institutions to adopt and implement uniform and binding rules on food security and nutrition. In Switzerland, the Global Programme works to ensure that Swiss policy-makers take account of global food security and the needs of smallholder farmers.

Examples from the Global Programme Food Security

“Soils have no voice and few people speak out for them. They are our silent ally in food production.”

José Graziano da Silva,
FAO Director-General

Fewer crop losses thanks to plant clinics:

The “Plantwise” initiative supported by the Global Programme is running 1,500 plant clinics in 34 countries which provide practical support to smallholder farmers. The clinics facilitate the early identification of pests and diseases and enable farmers to combat them with sustainable methods. The plant clinics are connected to a global database, enabling a global transfer of knowledge and equipping farmers to meet the challenge of protecting their crops against pests and diseases.

More rice with less water: In collaboration with China, the Philippines and Bangladesh, the Irrigated Rice Research Consortium (IRRC) has developed a technology that enables rice farmers to reduce their water use by 30% while increasing their yield at the same time. The IRRC, which has been funded by the Global Programme since 1997, promotes learning across borders and the spread of new farming methods in Asia.

Advice on the use of new technologies: In order to run their farms in a future-oriented manner, farmers need permanent access to new knowledge and market information. ‘Access Agriculture’ distributes videos to facilitate access to knowledge. ‘Agri-Fin Mobile’ uses mobile phones to bring new and affordable advisory services as well as microcredits and crop insurance coverage to remote areas.



“There’s still too much talk and too little action. Governments should invest more in research and advisory services.”

Hans R. Herren, winner of the World Food Prize and the Alternative Nobel Prize

“We have to reinvent the Green Revolution. We have to find new ways to make smallholder farming more productive, more sustainable and more profitable.”

Michel Mordasini,
Vice-President of IFAD



Additional income thanks to sustainable

land use: Land use rights are fundamental and also in great demand. Both farming families and investors want to secure their rights to agricultural land. The Global Programme helped write the relevant international guidelines and supports their implementation at the national level. WOCAT, a database developed by the University of Bern, is employed to document and disseminate sustainable land use approaches.

Promoting ecological agriculture: The SDC promotes, in collaboration with the Swiss Biovision foundation, an environmentally responsible agricultural policy at the national and international levels. The SDC and Biovision advocate for long-term action plans in countries such as Senegal, Kenya and Ethiopia. Building on smallholder farmers as important pillars of sustainable global food security, they aim to bring about a transition away from industrial agriculture.

Reducing post-harvest losses: In Latin America the SDC has contributed to the reduction of post-harvest losses. It developed simple metal silos that have enabled farmers to dramatically reduce storage losses. The number of silos is still growing today, ten years after the projects were launched. The Global Programme is applying this experience, combined with other technologies and approaches to reduce post-harvest losses, in African countries, and is thereby making healthy food more widely available.

Involving farmers in agricultural policy:

The Global Programme strengthens farmers’ organisations to enable them to take an active part in formulating national, continental and global agricultural strategies. Farmers are thus able to network better among themselves, smallholder farming is given better support and food security is taken more into consideration.

New impetus

The SDC is breaking new ground with the Global Programmes on Climate Change, Water, Food Security, and Migration and Development.

In addition to existing bilateral and multilateral work, this approach makes it possible to develop, disseminate and implement solutions to global challenges through worldwide political dialogue and concrete pilot projects.

In the context of food security and development, the SDC brings its hands-on field experience to the international political dialogue table. It has been successful in ensuring that innovative approaches are discussed and implemented in practice. Moreover, by linking dialogue and action, the Global Programme explicitly promotes the development and exchange of knowledge on the multifaceted interplay between food security and development.

“The private sector also thinks that governments have the authority and responsibility to create favourable framework conditions for agricultural investments.”

Robynne Anderson, Director
General of the International
Agri-Food Network

“No one has the magic recipe to eradicate malnutrition. Efforts vary from one context to another.”

Florence Lasbennes,
member of the secretariat
of the Scaling-up Nutrition
movement



Facts and figures on global food security

- Some 1.8 billion people live in smallholder farm households. Their crops meet around half the world's food requirement.
- 500 million smallholder farms produce around 50% of the world's food, are therefore the best guarantors of local food security, and have the greatest potential for increasing crop yields and preserving the environment.
- According to UN figures, women do 50% of agricultural work in developing countries. Yet because they have insufficient access to the means of production, their agricultural yields are 20–30% lower than men's. If women had better access to the means of production, hunger in developing countries could be reduced by around 17%.
- Scientists of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change expect that climate change will reduce the average crop yields of the most important food crops in developing countries by 2% per decade.
- According to the latest UN projections, the world's population will exceed nine billion by 2050. In order to meet global demand, food production will have to increase by 70% between now and then.

“Smallholder farmers are the ones who invest the most in their farms because they want to increase their productivity, become more prosperous and feed their families.”

Gerda Verburg, Chair of the
Committee on World Food
Security

Would you like to find out more?

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