

Dutch Food Security Policy – Consultation (September 2014)

Compiled overview of feedback ActionAid

Written by **Barbara van Paassen & Danny Wijnhoud**
<http://knowledge4food.net/consultation/>

Inputs had to be provided for the five international targets of the Zero Hunger Challenge for 2030 and there was space to point at missing elements:

Target 1 – 100% access to adequate food all year round

Target 2 – Zero stunted children less than 2 years

Target 3 – All food systems are sustainable

Target 4 – 100% increase in smallholder productivity and income

Target 5 – Zero loss or waste of food

Missing elements

Target 1 – 100% access to adequate food all year round

"Empowering women smallholders & prioritizing local food systems"

This is the most overarching and therefore priority target. It largely overlaps with all other targets. See also (forthcoming) input on missing elements.

We consider 3 policy priorities:

1. Empowerment (women) small-holder food producers and improving their access to and control over natural resources

Empowerment of currently deprived rural and urban poor, in particular women & girls, is most critical. The target will not be achieved by a mere increase of production without participation, ownership and access by vulnerable women and men. The pervasive downplaying of the importance and potential of smallholders, particularly women who produce up to 80% of local basic foodstuffs according to [FAO](#), is a key challenge and top priority to be addressed. Investing in land rights, particularly those of women smallholders, and climate-resilient sustainable agriculture provides multiple wins for women's rights, food and nutrition security, poverty reduction, health, climate change mitigation and adaptation, inclusive economic development, and combating growing inequality, unemployment, instability and violent conflicts. This is also emphasized by the High Level Panel of the Committee on [World Food Security](#) (CFS), the [Worldbank](#), [UNCTAD](#), [UNEP](#), [IFAD](#), [IOB](#) and many others.

Policy and interventions should prioritize:

- **Supporting agency and voice of women**, their access to and control over natural resources (land and water rights) and support for sustainable (climate-resilient) local food production, and

(agri)enterprise development. This also implies the need for addressing high and gender unequal unpaid care work burden of women and need for investment in women's functional literacy and other human, social and political livelihood capital assets. Securing access to land and water, favorable credit, inputs, appropriate knowledge and technology, extension services and training on rights, sustainable farming practices and marketing, are particularly key as well as gender-specific. Supporting the organization of women and smallholders in groups or cooperatives has proven very effective.

o See learnings and recommendations in 'What works for women' and recent '[Great Land Heist](#)', '[From Marginalisation to Empowerment](#)', experiences with [CRSA](#), as well as the [inspiring story of Maureen Adson](#).

o See also our [most recent policy analysis and recommendations for Dutch policies](#), particularly highlighting the importance of inclusive and appropriate interventions with clear target groups, monitoring and impact evaluation.

- **Support the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines**, as well as improve own policies to protect communities and women's land rights and ensure Free and Prior Informed Consent and other key principles for any investment taking place.

- **Support and promote public investment by (African) governments in participatory land use planning and more inclusive agricultural policies**, particularly targeting the needs of (women) smallholders and prioritizing local food production, e.g. via demand-driven public extension services (see for example also [our recommendations to CAADP](#)).

- **Guarantees that the voices and land and water rights and production systems of (women) smallholders will be prioritized in international processes and initiatives such as SDGs**, the Zero Hunger targets, Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA).

2. Understanding and addressing risks and opportunity costs for local food producers

Many policies and interventions, despite good intentions, provide insufficient guarantees for local ownership of food production systems and affordability to access food being produced. When subsistence farming is being replaced with agricultural labor on larger commercial farms, the rising (opportunity) costs of accessing food to be sourced elsewhere is often underestimated and access to food reduced. Claimed positive impacts of larger agri-businesses on small-scale producers, food security and local economic development have not materialized with negative impacts exceeding any gains up to today (see UNCTAD 2013, Schoneveld 2013, De Schutter 2014 etc.). More careful and gradual ways of promoting inclusive agricultural development, whilst addressing risks faced by smallholders, particularly women, and micro and small enterprises, is essential. Risks of promotion of large scale agriculture schemes include land and water (control) grabbing, loss of seed and broader

biodiversity, infringements on the right to food, monopolization of agri-inputs, divestment from public extension to smallholders, etc. Often these initiatives do not address root causes of food insecurity, i.e. power imbalances, exclusion and hurdles to build up livelihood capital assets as to reduce vulnerability. On the other hand there is much potential in supporting and upscaling initiatives that address these challenges, particularly also risk coping mechanisms of smallholders (WFP/FAO food security pillar missing in current food security policy).

3. Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and prioritizing local and regional food systems

We consider that the strong emphasis on Dutch trade interests and private sector participation may converge, but often competes with local small-scale food producers and local food and nutrition security interests. We recommend preventing top-down blueprints and interest-driven initiatives that are unlikely to serve the complex needs of the poor and food insecure; and to be careful with overemphasizing export-oriented global commodity chains in food-insecure contexts. Instead we suggest creating space and support for people-centered solutions addressing the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity in a sustainable and inclusive manner requiring:

- **Assessing (potential) impacts of all relevant policies and interventions on food security** and particularly the access to food by the most marginal groups. Embassy PCD assessments could be a tool in this and cooperation with other Ministries is key. This would contribute to ensuring that any policies and interventions the Dutch support do not compete with, but rather promote, inclusive local and national food markets and the right to food.
- **Phase out biofuel and other commodity targets that compete with food production**; introduce strong social criteria for all commodities, including Free Prior and Informed Consent.
- **Ensure policy coherence and fair international policies**, in particular trade policies and negotiations to ensure space for addressing CFS priorities (in particular the rights and needs of smallholders and policy space for governments to promote local and national food systems

Target 2 – Zero stunted children less than 2 years

"Empower women, Improve Local Food Systems and Healthcare"

As for access to food, also for combatting stunting ensuring small scale food producers', particularly women's, direct access to and control over natural resources and support to local food production and local food systems is key (see targets 1 and 3).

Achieving this target among others also requires:

- Awareness creation and training on preparation of affordable nutritious food with ingredients to be easily accessed from local food systems.

- The general empowerment of women and men sharing full responsibly of child care and unpaid care tasks
- Guaranteeing sufficient access to proteins, like dairy products and other nutritious food for infants and women.
- Improve Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare (SRHC), maternity and infant healthcare, as well as general healthcare for women and men
- Invest in literacy and functional literacy and skills training for women
- In particular support to women in producing and/or sourcing food for their children, ensuring men take their responsibility to support supply for healthy food to their households and infants ; support to single mothers, female headed households, orphans.
- Support community level crèches, nursery schools and child care if this would facilitate women to farm or otherwise earn an income
- Social Safety nets in particular orphans, and women living with HIV-AIDS, other illnesses or disabilities
- Avoid HIV vertical transmission and provide extra care and support to infants living with HIV-AIDS and other illnesses.

Target 3 – All food systems are sustainable

"Wake up, before it is too late"

"Wake up before its too late: Make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security a changing climate" was the telling title of an important report by UNCTAD in 2013. This challenge is urgent and requires political will that allows for smallholders and the poor can to be in the driving seat. Largely supported by this and other landmark reports, we see the following challenges and opportunities to achieve this target.

The need to build inclusive climate-resilient local and national food systems, whilst reversing non-sustainable global trends

The achievement of sustainable food systems worldwide can't go around acknowledgement of the complexities and political interests at stake. There are a lot of contradictions as enough food is being produced to feed the world, a third of it is spilled but an estimated about a billion people malnourished or not food secure. Many of these are smallholders and landless, in particular vulnerable women and children, in rural areas in the global south. Having faced neglect for years, the increasing interest in rural development and agriculture is an opportunity that has to be managed well. The increasing pressure on land and water is a huge challenge that risks marginalizing smallholder

land users and landless even further and needs to be addressed in order to ensure space for building solutions.

There is a need for much more common ground and agreement about shortcomings of existing food systems and the need for reshaping them. There is need to understand or acknowledge how respective food systems overlap or relate and impacted on by a multitude of broader agricultural (non-food), sociocultural, economic factors, power relations and institutions (rules-of the game), and the political economy at large. And finally, there is a need to build up locally owned climate resilient local and national food systems while addressing global challenges being faced.

Characteristics of sustainable (local/national) food systems:

- Locally owned, locally and nationally established in terms of production, post-harvest practices, local/ national value addition and inclusive local, national and regional markets;
- People-centered and inclusive (gender, socially) that ensures food for deprived people first. This also requires empowering and investing first and foremost in women smallholder farmers and their access and control of land, water and their labor inputs and addressing broader gender discrimination at all levels (including at household level division of labour and decision-making).
- Establish climate resilient integrated and bio-diverse food (and income) systems (this includes agroecology and combinations of drought-resistant production, water harvesting, and small-scale irrigation food product cooperatives of (women) smallholders; raising small ruminants in particular chicken and goats)
- Satisfying household and community consumption first before serving other local and national inclusive markets. Access is key – see inputs target 1 (incl social protection).
- Risk coping mechanisms for sufficient risk mitigation; there may be some specializations within diversified systems as to achieve sufficient economy of scale
- Beyond diversified farming systems, income diversification may rely on non-farming income as well
- Minimize and mitigate risks of droughts, flooding, other natural disasters and last but not least the external pressures resulting in land and water (control) grabbing, decline in local food production, food price hikes, collapse of public support systems to smallholders, loss of (agri)biodiversity, corporate capture and dependency
- As the above are often best addressed by targeting women smallholders: innovative public support systems providing demand-driven support to empower smallholder farmers, in particular women, and (women) micro, small and medium enterprises and cooperatives.

Reducing our natural resource foot print and tackling unfair and unsustainable international pressures

There is an urgent need to **reduce our global land and water foot print** and the negative impacts resulting from that as related to direct investment, consumption and role in global trade. This starts

with taking stock and identifying leverage points. This includes resource (land/water) efficiency, production and trading standards for global commodities, but also addressing consumption patterns and policies underlying these (whether for food, fodder, fuel, flowers). This could build on efforts of [PBL](#), as well as [civil society](#).

This also includes **addressing the risks and negative impacts of pressure on land and large scale land and agribusiness investment**. I.e. currently often not contributing to local food systems and food security, but resulting in land and water grab (widely documented, including in our recent [Land Heist](#) report, by UNCTAD, ILC, Cotula and many others), as well as issues of land, water and labour control. The latter occurs when smallholders engage in outgrower and contract farming schemes without sufficient bargaining power (often they are the most vulnerable and deprived chain actors ending up carrying most of the risks and least of the benefits) and when displacing and impacting local food production (and producers), markets, prices and food security (e.g. due to global commodity chain bias). There is also a risk of increasing gender disparities and further marginalization of women. As men tend to benefit more from cash crops and estate labor, decision-making and income are often biased towards men and women get more marginalized, whilst food requirements are under pressure. When women are involved or employed, there are still too often issues of decent work and wages, as well as overburdening. Finally, large scale investments bring particular risks of mono-cropping, land degradation, water depletion, deforestation and loss of (agro)biodiversity that increase rather than reduction of GHG emissions by global agriculture. As UNCTAD also states, there is an urgent need to moving away from conventional mono-culture, high external-input production towards more sustainable, regenerative, diverse and empowering production systems. Addressing power imbalances is essential to ensure more fair and sustainable commodity chains and investments.

Solutions include:

- Protecting the rights of women smallholder farmers and other legitimate land users through safeguards like the CFS Tenure Guidelines and FPIC; whilst empowering them to exercise these rights.
- Ensuring global policies and initiatives promote real sustainable agriculture and local food systems in line with recommendations above, UNCTAD, HLPE and others, rather than supporting initiatives that promote large-scale commercial farming without adequately addressing core reasons for food insecurity (in particular poverty and marginalisation), as well as risks and negative impacts above.
- Mapping, reducing and changing consumption, trade and related footprints. Beyond the need to change consumption and spilling habits, as well as policies underlying these (e.g. biofuels; food safety), there is a need for more regional and local sourcing of raw agricultural commodities and establish their local sustainable food systems (in particular also in OECD countries and BRICS).

- States and global fora to make food security and sustainable (local/national/regional) food systems a priority in WTO and other trade (related) negotiations and policies, particularly addressing priorities as identified by the Committee for Food Security (CFS) and addressing the interests and stakes of women smallholders.

Target 4 – 100% increase in smallholder productivity and income

"Support women smallholders, and transitions towards improved smallholder practices, and diversified food, income and livelihood systems"

There is a real risk focusing too much on productivity rather than ensuring access to affordable nutritious food and reducing wastes.

However, increasing food production is important for many smallholders and especially in places where there is insufficient food available locally. Smallholders, particularly women produce up to 80% of local basic foodstuffs (FAO). Unlike often thought, there is increasing evidence that small farms are often as productive as large farms and have particular high potential under appropriate conditions to produce more in a sustainable and inclusive manner (e.g. Larson 2012, as also quoted by [African Progress Panel](#)).

Policies should promote improved enabling environment for (women) smallholders – e.g. ensuring level playing field with larger farms, but also by investing in appropriate post-harvest practices and infrastructures – as well as directly support smallholders. Strong reports with strong recommendations like [IAASTD \(2008\)](#) (why sidelined?) , as well as more recently from CFS HLPE and UNCTAD, provide an important base for policy change and should be taken into account.

We also recommend having **a stronger rights-based approach** to food security, building on the right to food (including recommendations of former UNSR Right to Food, De Schutter) and women's equal rights. Treating food as a human right brings coherence and accountability. It helps to close the gaps by putting food security of all citizens at the top of the decision-making hierarchy, and making these decision-making processes participatory and accountable. We would like to re-emphasize that priority is to invest in empowerment of smallholder farmers, particular women smallholders, and to strengthen and secure their access to and control over natural resources, in particular land and water.

Note that it is a misunderstanding that advocating for smallholder support (as opposed to focusing on large-scale investments) equals advocating for the perpetuation of marginal smallholder farming. We do feel however that where food security policies and strategies have not been successful to date they were not people- and particularly women-centered, which would be key for promoting rural and

livelihood development. Marginal smallholders have to be supported to become productive smallholders relying on improved and more sustainable integrated food (& income) systems and subsequently if non-farming income opportunities arise part of them gradually may move out of farming and others may scale up sustainable farming practices.

Dutch policy implications include increasing more direct support to smallholders (e.g. with civil society) and supporting governments (e.g. as part of CAADP) to this more explicitly, whilst ensuring these efforts are not undermined by other policies and initiatives that might displace or compete with smallholders interest. This includes a stronger emphasis on the public window of Worldbank's GAFSP and making sure that the private window and other private sector finance take smallholder's interests as a starting point and includes them directly (e.g. by reducing the high funding thresholds, working with farmer groups, etc.). We also refer to [our recommendations for increasing investment in women smallholders](#) shared earlier this year, including references to embassy programmes, Topsectoren etc.

Additional requirements:

- Guaranteeing a level playing field and reducing negative impacts of large scale agri-business investments and production of non-food agriculture products
- Ensure smallholders prioritise food for their households, communities, local and national markets instead of cash crops for external or export markets. They may integrate cash crops, ideally also for processing by national industries, once food security and nutrition requirements are met. When production of cash crops pays off much better governments may have to intervene and take policy measures to guarantee sufficient food is being produced locally and nationally.
- Rehabilitate, step up and innovate public demand-driven support for climate resilient sustainable agriculture and agroecology as well as innovative post-harvest practices, processing off and adding value to food and agribusiness development, including entrepreneurial and business negotiation skills.
- Support to water harvesting and (small-scale) irrigation, introduction of drought resistant crops, agro-forestry and food trees, fish farming, small livestock within integrated farming and livelihood systems. This shall both raise the income but more importantly reduces the risks to become food and income insecure.
- Embark on efficient modalities for facilitating the establishment and strengthening of smallholder farmers and other producer association or autonomous cooperatives (single or multiple purpose)
- Invest in local seed banks and seed and food sovereignty
- Move into non-farming income generating activities and alternative decent work if opportunities arise but still maintain a kitchen garden or small farm if possible.
- Peri-urban and urban farming provides opportunities even for city dwellers

- In order to promote inclusive local economic development it is pertinent to invest rural infrastructure and rural growth centers. The latter for hosting local markets , agri-industries and a diversity of business and social services

See also our input for target 1 and other recommendations for investing in smallholders in the following ActionAid (and joint) publications: What works for women, [Great Land Heist, From Marginalisation to Empowerment](#)’ and experiences with [CRSA](#).

Target 5 – Zero loss or waste of food

"Minimizing and therefore substantially reducing loss or waste of food"

A target of zero loss or waste refers to an unrealistic ideal but the target should be to minimizing and therefore substantially reducing loss and waste of food.

Recommendations and attention points are the following:

- Generate awareness about and skills training (f/m) on food processing and conservation of nutritious foods
- Generate awareness (f/m) about edible and nutritious crop and animal products that are currently being wasted; make better use of crop residues and organic “waste” for soil fertility management like composting, ploughing back or mulching in integrated agroecological systems.
- Research, learn about and influence the gendered aspects of local food preparation and food customs; women and men to divide burden of unpaid care tasks, including food preparation.
- The promotion of short chains for local, sub-national and national food systems resulting in more local sourcing of food ingredients
- Support investment in solid traditional or non-traditional storage facilities for staple crops at household, community / cooperative and sub-national levels and for instance in “inclusive” warehouse receipt system (WRS) arrangements serving continuous household access to food and higher off-season prices for surplus production.
- Increase value addition, conservation, including traditional and non-traditional local cooling facilities, improve marketing of non-processed and processed non-staple food products including fruits, vegetables, nuts, vegetable oils, fish, dairy and other animal products.
- Invest in market and transport infrastructures for year-round inclusive local and sub-national food markets
- Support product promotion and marketing on the basis of origin and traceability of ingredients.
- Reduce food waste in global north and southern cities as to reduce the food resource foot print

- End biofuel and other targets that divert food and resources away from their human consumption
- Awareness creation with and support to urban communities as also relevant for their involvement in reducing loss and waste of food in general or when engaged in urban and peri-urban agriculture. Just to note that a large percentage of city dwellers in the global south periodically or part-time engage in crop farming or livestock production in peri-urban and rural areas.
- Manage rural-urban dimensions of loss or waste of food.

As to guarantee inclusive systems it is pertinent to invest first and foremost in human, social and political livelihood capital assets of vulnerable communities, in particular in girls and women.

Are there elements missing in the Zero Hunger Challenge and this consultation which should be included in the Dutch food security policy?

"Reflections on Zero Hunger Targets approach and pillars of current Dutch Food Security policy"

We have been wondering as why feedback and input is being collected per Zero Hunger Target and not per food security pillar instead. For instance targets 1 and 3 are very much overarching and appear to be pillars as such whereas target 2 is very specific. We judge the WFP / FAO food security pillars are useful for policy-making. In that sense it was remarkable that the current Dutch Food Security Policy (2012-2015) did not use the same pillars. Instead it downplayed some of the more social dimensions such as "Risk coping mechanism as to guarantee stability and sustainability". This is exactly the pillar that does address vulnerability and risks of food insecure and malnourished people. A pillar on 'better business climate' was introduced instead. It was supposed to create synergy but also created confusion about the convergence of (and tension between) private sector development and food security objectives. We would propose to stick to existing FAO definitions and where business climate is addressed to ensure this favors (women) smallholders and micro and small businesses first. In addition, a more explicit human rights based approach (in line with FAO and UN initiatives) would strengthen Dutch food security policies and pillars in order to serve the ultimate objectives of food security and the right to food.

Additional pertinent issues

The following pertinent issues have not been covered or may easily be overlooked and disappear from the agenda:

- Human rights perspective; right to food ([UN resolution 68 /177](#)) and women's rights. It is essential to implement UN resolutions and CFS guidelines on the Right to Food and to integrate recommendations of former [UNSR Right to food](#). Treating food as a human right brings coherence and accountability. It helps to close the gaps by putting food security of all citizens at the top of the decision-making hierarchy, and making these decision-making processes participatory and accountable.
- Risk coping mechanisms and investments in resilience of vulnerable communities, women in particular.
- Existing policies and initiatives are insufficiently engendered, let alone focused on empowerment of women. There is much to be gained by strengthening policy coherence and integrating more strongly women's rights and food security (right to food) policies. Each and every policy should be screened on their impact on women's rights, food & nutrition security and the right to food. [See for instance most recent policy analysis and recommendations for Dutch policies](#).
- As related, solutions should be people-centered and the voices of food insecure and malnourished people are rarely heard, let alone they are represented and consulted as equals and in fact prime stakeholders when dealing with their food and nutrition security (see also comment Carol Gribnao of HIVOS).
- [Power relations \(imbalances\), Political Economy & Political Analysis](#). The importance of political economy and politics is too much downplayed and if accepted it rarely translates into politically-informed programming (see also comment Herman Brouwer CDI-WUR)
- The roles and added value of respective segments within the private sector requires a realistic assessment (see comment Herman Brouwer, CDI-WUR) We are missing the Theory of Change as whether and how "trade for development" and "private sector development" guarantee food and nutrition security? Would this be through inclusion, participation of and ownership by vulnerable women and men? How to avoid dependency, IPR hurdles? There is a risk that many initiatives with social and environmental goals are becoming agribusiness promotion initiatives captured by large companies. Mainstream Value Chain Development and PPPs initiatives ([see recent "Moral Hazard? OXFAM publication](#)) are no Panacea for food and nutrition security. Business models involving smallholders or micro enterprises largely address concerns and risks of the most powerful players rather than covering engendered micro-economic and risk analysis at intra-household, household and community levels assessing opportunity costs and establishing risk coping mechanisms guaranteeing resilience.
- Avoid the "blind people and the elephant syndrome" meaning each stakeholder focusing within their niche, but without understanding the overall system complexity and therefore never being effective in

transforming the (overall) system. This also exposes (foreign) investors and the private sector claiming to solve the food security and nutrition crisis without being acquainted with deprivation, local livelihood and food security challenges in a power-imbalanced globalizing world.

- Policy recommendations also should guide institutional development and elaborate roles and responsibilities of respective stakeholders and combat stagnation and decline due to vested interest, unclear or overlapping mandates and avoid competition like between donors, NGOs or often public institutions within one and the same government system. For instance, a lot of thinking and capacity development should go into establishing or rehabilitating and transforming demand driven public support systems for supporting (women) smallholders and micro and small enterprises, rural-urban and livelihood transitions.
- The negative impacts of Structural Adjustment Policies and restrictions on investments in quality of public social and economic service delivery should not be underestimated. Also the shift to promotion of FDI and large-scale agriculture resulted in a near collapse of public agricultural research and extension systems. Moreover, corruption had and has a destructive effect on the quality of basic service delivery.
- In many developing countries basic social and economic service delivery is poor. More and better investments in health, literacy, education, vocational and skills training for income generation, gender and political awareness of the poor, in particular women, in combination with sincere attention for combatting corruption and improving governance would give a major boost to food security.
- Instability, conflict and/or war beyond destroying the business environment are causing a large number of crises, including refugee crises, resulting in large groups being affected by malnourishment, hunger, disease and famines. This means that food and nutrition security shall not be achieved if not addressing the root causes of conflict, like land and water grabbing and broader land & water conflicts, extreme poverty, extreme inequality and exclusion, which also may result in radicalization in turn feeding terrorism and conflict.