



Governing Body

312th Session, Geneva, November 2011

GB.312/POL/7

Policy Development Section
Social Dialogue Segment

POL

SEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Decent work in the global food supply chain: A sectoral approach

Overview

Summary

The United Nations High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) has recently given the ILO and its Decent Work Agenda an enhanced role in the HLTF's efforts to promote and coordinate a comprehensive response to the challenge of achieving food security. Against this backdrop, the paper outlines a proposed multi-sectoral programme to promote food security through decent work in critical economic sectors across the global food supply chain for consideration and endorsement by the Governing Body.

Policy implications

If endorsed by the Governing Body, the paper's considerations and proposals will form the basis of a multi-sectoral programme to promote food security through decent work.

Legal implications

None.

Financial implications

None. Extra-budgetary resources will be pursued to implement the programme proposed in the paper.

Decision required

Paragraph 22.

Follow-up action required

If endorsed by the Governing Body and upon the availability of resources, the Office will carry out a programme in accordance with the considerations and proposals contained herein.

Author unit

Sectoral Activities Department (SECTOR).

References to other Governing Body documents and ILO instruments

GB303/PV.

Resolution concerning the ILO's and the tripartite constituents' role in tackling the global food crisis (adopted on 11 June 2008 by the International Labour Conference at its 97th Session).

Introduction

1. At its 303rd Session (November 2008), the Governing Body authorized¹ the holding of a tripartite technical workshop on the impact of the food price crisis on decent work (Geneva, 5–6 March 2009) in response to a resolution adopted by the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference.² The workshop underscored the ILO's range of expertise in the world of work that could "clearly contribute to improved food security" and recommended that "the ILO should identify areas where its unique mandate and specific expertise can strengthen existing UN efforts in this area". It further recommended that "the Governing Body request the Director-General to formalize interaction between the ILO and the HLTF [United Nations High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis³]."⁴

Context

2. Today close to 1 billion people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger, while, at the same time, the current trend of unprecedented increase in food prices makes for more hunger, poverty, unemployment, social unrest, and political instability.
3. The fragile economic recovery and high unemployment rates in many countries as well as the persistence of hunger hamper efforts to attain agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in particular MDG1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The inclusion of Target 1.B to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all including women and young people" under MDG1 has acknowledged the fundamental role of decent work in reducing poverty and addressing food insecurity in a sustainable manner.
4. The ILO, with its tripartite constituency and in-depth expertise in the world of work, is uniquely placed to contribute to and strengthen existing UN efforts towards improved food security through decent work, in particular in building livelihood resilience.

HLTF and decent work for food security

5. Since it became a member of the HLTF in June 2009, the ILO has contributed to the development and implementation of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA). According to the summary of the UCFA (August 2011), entitled Food and Nutrition Security: Comprehensive Framework for Action, the UCFA "... invites stakeholders to consider food and nutrition security as the outcome of an extensive range of sectoral policies and activities that need to be addressed comprehensively and

¹ GB.303/PV para. 259(b).

² ILO: Resolution concerning the ILO's and the tripartite constituents' role in tackling the global food crisis, adopted on 11 June 2008 by the International Labour Conference at its 97th Session.

³ The HLTF was established in April 2008 by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to promote and coordinate a comprehensive and unified response to the challenge of achieving food security.

⁴ ILO: *Tripartite Technical Workshop on the Impact of the Food Price Crisis on Decent Work. Report* (Geneva, 2009) (TTWFPC/2009), see the "Room note for food crisis meeting", paras (1) and (2), p. 8.

coherently”.⁵ It advocates a twin-track approach by acknowledging the need for: (i) addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations; and (ii) building longer term resilience by eliminating the structural causes of food insecurity.

6. The document explicitly highlights that decent jobs and social protection can contribute significantly to lasting food security. It also stresses the importance of creating an enabling environment for effective social dialogue on employment practices and encouraging development of labour market institutions with a view to helping States implement international labour standards.⁶
7. The importance of decent work has also been highlighted in a draft “Guidance note on integrating food and nutrition security into country analysis and UNDAF [United Nations Development Assistance Framework]” developed within the framework of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The ILO has co-led the preparation of this note together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).
8. As a contribution to the HLTF country-level work, the Office, through its Sectoral Activities Department, has developed a holistic multi-sectoral decent work programme that aims to support tripartite constituents to give effect to national strategies and policies on food security. Six countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania) have been identified for implementation of the programme and Kenya is envisaged as the first pilot country.

Decent work for food security – A sectoral approach

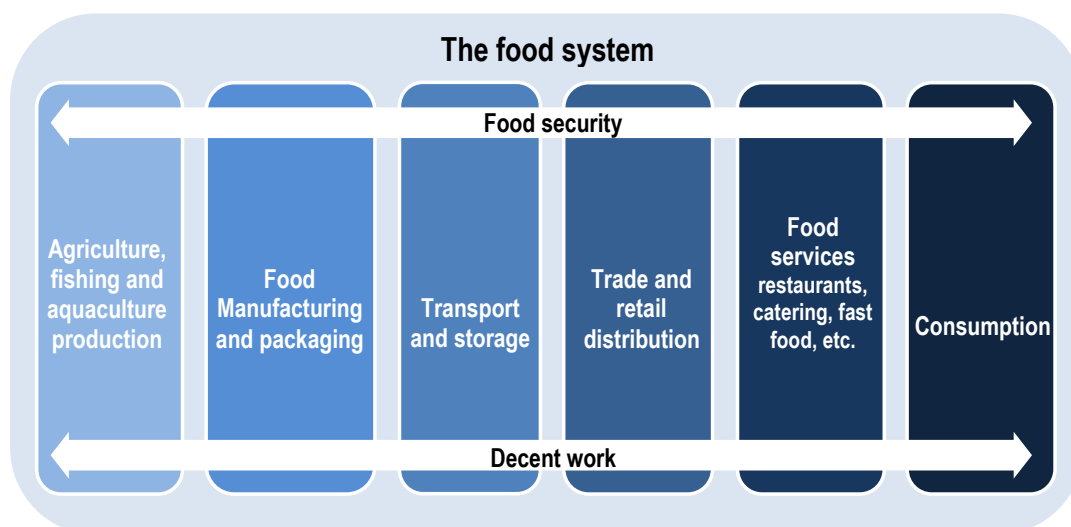
9. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “... when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.⁷ From an ILO perspective, this definition encompasses the ability of workers and their families to build sustainable livelihoods through decent work.
10. Based on these considerations, the Office has developed a sectoral programme which aims at promoting food security through decent work by expanding opportunities for productive and fairly remunerated employment in key industries within the food system, underpinned by rights at work, social protection and social dialogue.
11. Decent jobs can accelerate economic growth, stimulate food production, processing and accessibility, and provide incomes to allow large parts of the population to exit poverty and to be food-secure.
12. Over the last decades, social protection has been increasingly recognized as a powerful tool in addressing food insecurity and building livelihood resilience. The ILO’s expertise in the design and governance of social security policies and programmes aiming to reduce vulnerability and strengthen productive capacity is therefore of particular importance.

⁵ HLTF: *Food and Nutrition Security: Comprehensive Framework for Action*, Aug. 2011, p. 7.

⁶ op. cit. pp. 16–18.

⁷ *World Food Summit Plan of Action*, World Food Summit, Rome, 13–17 November 1996, para. 1.

13. The involvement of sectoral trade unions, employers' organizations and national, regional and local authorities in the development and implementation of strategies to counter food insecurity will ensure ownership, sustainability and relevance to countries' needs.



Programme objectives and strategic approach

14. The programme aims to support constituents in their efforts to promote the increase in the quantity, quality, and distribution of food to vulnerable groups by targeting decent work challenges in specific sectors across the food value chain through a set of integrated actions. It is not the goal to tackle all possible issues in the food system, but to carry out interventions in specific sectors that are critical for ensuring a functional system.
15. The programme seeks to provide a decent work response in supporting ILO constituents to give effect to their national and regional food security strategies. The food system, from production to consumption, will form the backbone of the programme, with the approach evolving around interrelated issues including agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture production, food manufacturing and packaging, transport and storage, trade and retail distribution, as well as food services. The goal is to expand opportunities for decent jobs with the aim of improving the functioning of the food value chain. The green jobs approach will be pursued in order to ensure sustainability.
16. The consumption component of the food system focuses on vulnerable workers who do not have access to adequate food and nutrition even though food supply may be secure in a country or a region. The inability to purchase food in sufficient quantity and quality is an expression of inadequate purchasing capacity. The problem is particularly prominent in urban and peri-urban areas, where workers may not be able to fall back on subsistence farming and therefore need cash to increase their food supply. Sectoral strategies aiming to generate income or to provide safety nets to food-insecure workers contribute to food security and poverty reduction.

Programme components

17. The first element of the proposed sectoral strategy to support constituents in applying a decent work response to food insecurity is a food system country scan. These scans will look at the country's food system situation through the lens of the Decent Work Agenda. The scan will subsequently inform country-specific programme activities and identify existing policy frameworks, main actors and mechanisms related to food security. The

focus of the interventions will thus be tailored to country-specific needs and circumstances and reflect Decent Work Country Programme priorities.

- 18.** More concretely, the programme proposes to strengthen the capacity of tripartite sectoral constituents by, as appropriate, supporting their efforts to:
 - create decent and potentially “green” jobs throughout the food value chain and improving working conditions to foster productivity involving, inter alia, the following sectors of the economy: agriculture (both rural and urban), fisheries and aquaculture, food manufacturing and packaging, transport and storage, trade and retail distribution, and food services;
 - promote sustainable enterprises in relevant sectors as well as support the development of cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, mutual aid groups, social enterprises and other types of associations;
 - improve workplace safety and health and prevent major food-borne disease outbreaks by establishing food safety management systems and contingency plans; promote food standards, implement skills development and training programmes on food safety and quality standards;
 - address decent work challenges in key sectors related to food market access and distribution, such as transport, storage, trade, retail distribution and catering;
 - improve access to food for vulnerable groups of workers through income generation in sectors of the urban and peri-urban economy with growth potential through employment expansion policies and job promotion schemes, including access to training, labour market information, and other relevant actions; and
 - improve access to food through social protection by promoting innovative sector-specific social protection schemes with particular focus on vulnerable groups and women.
- 19.** The programme will entail the development of both global tools and national projects, with a focus on replicable solutions to those decent work challenges that negatively impact food security. It will pursue strategic partnerships both at global and national levels, and will promote the exchange of experiences and information, including through South–South and triangular cooperation.
- 20.** Constituents will be involved throughout the process: (i) at the global and national levels to advise policy and programme development; and (ii) at the local level to coordinate actions and support implementation, according to country-specific requirements.
- 21.** The Office will continue to work together and maximize synergies with other members of the UN system based on the respective comparative advantages in order to provide the necessary response to country needs. As the lead agency for the world of work, the ILO will continue to provide support to the development and implementation of UN joint programmes, in particular by ensuring that the national multi-sectoral response to improving food security includes employment and decent work.

22. The Governing Body may wish to endorse the strategic approach contained in paragraphs 9–16 and encourage the Office to seek extra-budgetary funding to support the implementation of sector-specific activities as described in paragraphs 17–21.

Geneva, 16 September 2011

Point for decision: Paragraph 22