

After the World Food Crisis of 2008: global initiatives on trial

The food price crisis in 2008 and subsequent developments in the global food economy served to put food security and hunger back on the political agenda. Food riots occurred in over 30 countries, and various policy actions to contain food prices were triggered in more than 100 countries. A number of policy initiatives have been taken at global, regional and national level to address short and longer term food and nutrition security.

For the past decade, the world has seen the number of hungry steadily increase. In 2007 international food prices began to rise, with the first months of 2008 alone witnessing the doubling in price of many staple crops. The depth of the crisis was highlighted by FAO's revised hunger figure in 2009 which revealed that an additional 100 million people had become undernourished, bringing the overall global figure to over one billion for the first time. Food prices fell from mid-2008 onwards and through 2009, influenced by the global recession. However, commodity prices began to rise once again during 2010. The FAO's global Food Price Index rose for eight consecutive months to February 2011, reaching its highest level since its inception in 1990 and surpassing its previous peak of June 2008. To increase food security, six global initiatives and various regional and national initiatives have been introduced, which will be considered in this paper.

Tom Arnold
 Chief Executive
 Concern Worldwide
 Dublin, Ireland
 tom.arnold@concern.net

■ UN System initiatives

In April 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon established a High-Level Task Force (HLTF) in response to the escalating food price crisis. The Task Force brought together the heads of UN agencies dealing with different aspects of food security and was charged with developing a plan of action to respond to the crisis. The result was the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA). It also sought to act as a catalyst for action by all food security stakeholders, from government, international and regional organisations and civil society. A menu

of potential policies towards improving food security was presented which fell under two sets of actions, the first set focusing on meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, the second on building resilience and contributing to global food and nutrition security.

The HLTF prepared a progress report in 2009 on its efforts to support country-led actions. In addition to some notable achievements, signifi-

The 2008 food price crisis put hunger and food security back on the political agenda.



Photo: laif

Protest against G20 policies at the Pittsburgh Summit, USA 2009.

cant challenges were highlighted such as continued volatility in food prices and uncertain economic, climatic and trading conditions. The combination of these factors increased the number of people suffering from malnutrition and food insecurity. As a result, the decision was taken to 'recalibrate' the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) in 2010 to reflect the changing context since 2008. A civil society input into this process was made through a meeting of some 150 civil society stakeholders held in Dublin in May 2010 and hosted by the HLTF, Irish Aid and Concern Worldwide. The revised CFA was published in October 2010.

■ G8 Summits

The 2008 food price crisis was also on the Agenda of the G8 Summit in July 2008, in Hokkaido, Japan. The Hokkaido Statement on Food Security called on the international community to create a plan for action to address food security immediately and in the future. Moreover, it proposed several policy commitments concerning food security such as reforming the FAO and removing export restrictions on food commodities. In addition to these prescriptions, the Hokkaido Statement highlighted the 10 billion US dollars (USD) committed by G8 countries towards improved food security since January 2008.

Food security was again on the agenda of the G8 Summit of 2009, held in L'Aquila, Italy. The Summit adopted the L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security and established the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI). The declaration stressed the scale of the food insecurity problem and the urgency to act. Food security, it noted, is closely connected with economic growth and social progress as well as with political stability and peace. A



Photo: laif

number of principles were outlined. In an effort to translate these into action, 20 billion USD was pledged over three years (2010–12) for sustainable agricultural development.

The 2009 G8 and G20 Summits further established a framework for co-ordinated and comprehensive action among host governments, donors, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders. Five key principles of a common approach were articulated at L'Aquila which embraced the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. They were subsequently endorsed as the Rome Principles for Sustainable Food Security at the 2009 World Summit on Food Security.

At the 2010 G8 Summit in Muskoka, Canada, leaders noted that 6.5 billion USD of the amount pledged in 2009 had already been allocated and declared their continuing dedication to disbursing their individual commitments by 2012. The L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) group, consisting of the G8 and others who endorsed the AFSI, meet on a roughly quarterly basis. At their meeting in December 2010, it was agreed that future reporting will continue to include figures on both commitments and disbursements.

It was further agreed that disbursement information will be provided through the OECD-DAC's forward spending survey and the same process will be followed as in 2010, to work through the G8 Accountability Working Group for the purposes of communicating AFSI commitments and disbursements in the G8's Accountability Report. France has offered to provide a summary report of the AFSI group's activities at the 37th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS – see also article on pages 13–15) in October 2011, and the OECD-DAC will provide a matrix table of disbursements at national level. This matrix will serve to enhance co-ordination as well as a possible input into the broader mapping exercise currently being carried out by the CFS.

■ Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)

The idea of a trust fund to promote agricultural development was first discussed at the G8 meeting in L'Aquila in 2009. Leaders at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh in September 2009 subsequently called on the World Bank Group to "work with interested donors and organisations to develop a multi-lateral trust fund to scale up agricultural assistance to low-income countries". The

World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP) in January, 2010.

The GAFSP is designed to support country-led efforts to improve food security and strengthen agricultural sectors in developing countries, providing funding to medium to long-term elements of agricultural development strategies. In April 2010, the US, Canada, Spain, South Korea and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation pledged 880 million USD to the fund.

Funds can be channelled through either a public or private window. GAFSP financing is aimed to provide for:

- Raising agricultural productivity
- Linking farmers to markets
- Reducing risk and vulnerability
- Non-farm rural livelihoods
- Technical Assistance

At the third meeting of the GAFSP steering committee in June 2010, five of the eight proposals submitted by countries for the first round of funding were approved in principle, totalling 224 million USD, including 50 million USD each to Rwanda, Bangladesh, and Sierra Leone; and 35 million USD to Haiti. The GAFSP also approved a budget of 170,000 USD to support Southern civil society organisations' participation in the GAFSP Steering Committee. However, concerns have been raised about the lack of participation by farmers' organisations in

the preparation of, and incorporation in, the plans for implementation in nearly all the proposals. Based on these interventions, the Steering Committee agreed that comments/instructions on the importance of greater engagement with producer organisations be sent to the countries for incorporation in their final project plans.

A second funding round was called during the summer of 2010, and 20 proposals were submitted, of which the Steering Committee meeting in November approved three, including Ethiopia (51.5 million USD), and Niger (33 million USD). The remaining 17 proposals have been held for further review. The funding situation for GAFSP is, however, difficult. Of the 880 million USD initially promised, only 400 million USD has actually been committed, with 360 million USD disbursed to countries. There is uncertainty over the US 2011 budget allocation for GAFSP for 2011, while it is hoped that other countries may come in with some additional support.

■ Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

With the failures of the global decision-making system on food and agriculture highlighted by the rise in food prices in 2007/08 and an increase in the number of hungry people, a momentum developed to change the global architecture governing food security and nutrition issues. During

2009, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) underwent a broad reform process designed to make it more effective by including a wider group of stakeholders and increasing its ability to promote policies that reduce food insecurity (see article on pages 13–15).

■ Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN)

Over the past couple of years, there has been a growing international consensus about the critical importance of early childhood nutrition and the high human and societal costs of undernutrition during the first 1,000 days of life – from pregnancy to two years of age. The medical journal *The Lancet* produced a series on maternal and child undernutrition in 2008 which provided a solid, scientific basis for increased efforts and interventions targeted towards nutrition. This has also been backed by political commitments at the highest political level, with additional resources being pledged as well. This convergence has manifested itself in a significant initiative called Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN).

Negotiated through a series of consultations towards the end of 2009 and early 2010, the SUN Framework was officially launched at a high-level meeting during the Spring meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April 2010. The SUN represents agreement on a broad framework for action to counter the neglect of nutrition. It is supported by a wide range of stakeholders including the UN, multi-lateral and bi-lateral development agencies, foundations, developing countries, NGOs and other civil society organisations, researchers, and the private sector.

In order to ensure sustained momentum and commitment, the framework was quickly followed up by a roadmap for its implementation. A Transition Team (TT) has been established to



Poverty reduction and food security have returned to the front stage, also in international agricultural research.

Photo: J. Boethling

oversee its implementation. Dr David Nabarro, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Food Security and Nutrition, chairs the TT and its work will be supported by six Task Forces to provide input on various elements of the roadmap. A number of developing countries – ‘Early riser’ countries – have committed to implement the SUN Initiative and have set in train initial efforts to scale up nutrition by the end of 2011.

■ Agricultural research

Agricultural production will need to increase by 70 percent in the world and double in developing countries in order to feed a global population expected to reach 9.1 billion by 2050. There is a growing recognition, expressed clearly in the World Bank’s 2008 Development Report, that there have been decades of under-investment in agricultural research, in technical advisory services, extension and agricultural education. As a result, agricultural innovation systems in many developing countries are weak, fragmented and poorly linked with farmers, civil society and the private sector and are not well placed to meet the challenges of food security, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

The Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a network of international agricultural research centres across the world, committed to starting a reform process in its 2007 Annual Meeting, and this reform process is currently being implemented. A new governance arrangement was put in place in early 2010 through the creation of a Consortium Board charged with overseeing and advancing the reform process. The overall vision for the CGIAR system will be expressed through an agreed Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) which has defined four priority strategic system level outcomes for international agricultural research, namely reduction of rural poverty, increase in food security, improving

The formation of a Global Consortium on Food Security Initiatives

While food prices are continuing to hit an all-time high month after month, it seems that the world’s political interest has already moved on and is focusing on other top news. But fighting food insecurity has to stay on top of all agendas, including those of policy and research. Setting out from this, the Food Security Center of the University of Hohenheim in Germany, in co-operation with Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture of the Philippines, will bring together a group of centres, institutes and initiatives from all continents dealing with food security issues as their core activity in research and capacity development, in order to establish a *Global Consortium on Food Security Initiatives*.

The ultimate goal of this Global Consortium is to synergise the individual efforts and capacities of the various centres and programmes, to fight food insecurity through research and capacity development and to maintain the momentum of a generally accepted importance of food security for local and global development beyond the acute food price crisis.

This initiative intends to start with a small but representative group of centres, institutes and initiatives working world-wide on food security. As the Global Consortium matures, other and more organisations will be invited to join the Global Consortium, and collaboration with existing international and national bodies will develop. The first meeting is to take place as a side-event during the International Conference on Asian Food Security 2011 (ICAFS2011) in Singapore from August 10th–12th, 2011.

Detlef Virchow, Food Security Center, University of Hohenheim

nutrition and health, and more sustainable management of natural resources. The detailed research programme will be defined through a series of 15 Consortium Research Programmes (CRPs), which involve cross-centre collaboration in specific research areas.

■ Regional and national initiatives

Various regional and national initiatives have also been launched of which four will be discussed here.

CAADP. In 2003, the African Union (AU) agreed the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa. As part of that Declaration, the CAADP was established as the agricultural programme of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). CAADP aims at improving food security, nutrition, and increasing incomes in Africa’s largely farming based economies (see also pages 27–29). The goals set by CAADP for African governments

included (a) raise agricultural productivity by at least 6 percent per year and (b) allocate 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture. CAADP aims to bring diverse key players, at continental, regional and national level, to promote efforts to help African countries achieve higher growth rates through agriculture-led development, and it is the key policy process for agricultural development in Africa.

AGRA. Inspired by the Green Revolution in Asia, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation joined forces in 2006 to establish the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Headed by Kofi Annan, AGRA is a partnership-based organisation working across the continent. Through partnering with African governments, research institutes, farmers organisations, the private sector and civil society, it focuses on achieving food security through promoting sustainable agricultural growth through smallholder farmers. AGRA has set ambitious targets of reducing food insecurity

by 50 percent in at least 20 countries and to increase the income of 20 million smallholder families by 2020. AGRA has already seen some successes. It estimates that its support to local African breeders and seed companies has created 140 new, locally adapted varieties of seed. AGRA and its partners have also mobilised 160 million USD in affordable loans from local commercial banks through credit guarantees.

EU-Food Facility. The EU's response to the 2008 food price crisis was the one-billion-euro European Commission (EC) Food Facility, which was announced in July 2008 by European Commission President Manuel Barroso as "a strong and rapid agricultural supply response". Designed to provide a speedy response targeting harvests in the northern and southern hemispheres, the final administrative decision was not taken, however, until March 2009, nearly one year after the peak of cereal prices. The Food Facility provided funds for projects intended to alleviate the impacts of the price crisis through short to medium-term projects carried out by international and regional organisations as well as non state actors and budget support programmes.

Fifty priority countries were identified by the EC that could avail of the facility. Over 550 million euros of the Food Facility funds was channelled

through the international organisations. A call for proposals for Non-State Actors in the amount of 200 million euros was launched in May 2009, targeting 35 of the 50 priority countries.

A sub-group of Concord (the European alliance of national NGO platforms), the European Food Security Group, in partnership with a number of regional platforms for African farmers, is monitoring the extent to which European policies have been in line with the approaches agreed in the EC's Advancing African Agriculture (AAA) communication. The second report, launched in 2010, focused on three issues that relate to AAA, one of which was the Food Facility.

Feed the Future (FtF). Feed the Future (FtF) is the US government's initiative on food security and hunger, which it launched in 2010. It stems from the 2009 G8 Summit in L'Aquila, when President Barack Obama pledged 3.5 billion USD for agriculture and food security over three years. The scheme aims to reach 40 million people, including 25 million children, over ten years in an effort to tackle chronic hunger and contribute to global food security. Twenty countries have been initially identified as focal countries based on level of need, agricultural growth potential, enabling conditions, and regional synergies. Investments under the scheme will be in two

phases, with phase 1 concentrating on investments to accelerate inclusive agricultural growth and improve nutrition. To move to phase 2, a country must illustrate evidence of quality coordination and consultation with key stakeholders.

■ Conclusion

The 2008 food price crisis put food security and hunger back on the political agenda. It had the positive effect of stimulating a number of initiatives aimed at increasing global and national food and nutrition. Whether these initiatives impact positively or not will depend on three factors: Firstly, whether food insecure developing countries put in place a coherent and supportive domestic policy framework to support increased food and nutrition security. Within sub-Saharan Africa, a sustained commitment to implement the CAADP objectives will be a key indicator of intent. Secondly, whether donor countries deliver on their commitment to provide additional aid resources. The results shown in the annual G8 Accountability Report will show if donors live up to their commitments or not. Thirdly, how national and aid resources combine within country-owned development programmes to produce short and long-term results. The reformed CFS can play an important role in monitoring these results.

Zusammenfassung

Die Nahrungsmittelpreiskrise 2008 löste in über 30 Ländern Unruhen aus. Sie lenkte das Augenmerk der Politik verstärkt auf die Ernährungssicherheit und führte zu einer Reihe internationaler, regionaler und nationaler Initiativen zur Verbesserung der Nahrungssicherung. Dieser Beitrag gibt einen Überblick über zehn dieser Initiativen, davon sechs auf internationaler und vier auf regionaler Ebene. Ob diese eine positive Wirkung haben werden, hängt von drei Faktoren ab: davon, ob die Entwicklungsländer mit prekärer Ernährungslage solide politische Rahmenbedingungen zur Verbesserung der Ernährungssicherung schaffen können, ob die Geberländer ihre Zusagen

für erhöhte Hilfslieferungen einhalten und davon, in welcher Form nationale Ressourcen und Hilfen gemeinsam zu kurz- und langfristigen Verbesserungen der Nahrungssicherung führen können. Jeder dieser Faktoren muss sorgfältig überwacht werden.

Resumen

La crisis de los precios de los alimentos de 2008 dio lugar a disturbios en torno al tema en más de 30 países. Incrementó el enfoque político en la seguridad alimentaria y nutricional e hizo surgir una serie de iniciativas internacionales, regionales y nacionales para fortalecer esta seguridad. El estudio contiene los principales detalles de diez de estas iniciativas, seis de ellas

internacionales y cuatro a nivel regional. El posible impacto positivo de dichas iniciativas dependerá de tres factores: la posibilidad de que los países en desarrollo afectados por la inseguridad alimentaria provean un marco de políticas de apoyo para mejorar la seguridad alimentaria y nutricional; la posibilidad de que los países donantes hagan realidad sus compromisos de incrementar los flujos de ayuda, y – finalmente – el modo en que los recursos nacionales y provenientes de la ayuda extranjera puedan combinarse para producir mejoras de corto y largo plazo en la seguridad alimentaria y nutricional. Cada uno de estos factores debe monitorearse cuidadosamente.