

Towards sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all



Food Security Policy of



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Currently working in 50 countries through local partner organisations, ICCO is the interchurch organisation for development cooperation and one of the five largest Dutch co-financing agencies. Kerk in Actie is the missionary and diaconal organisation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. It works in the Netherlands and abroad.

In January 2007, the international departments of ICCO & Kerk in Actie were merged and are now sharing partners and programmes. ICCO & Kerk in Actie give financial support and advice to local organisations and networks across the globe that are committed to providing access to basic social services, bringing about sustainable fair economic development and promoting democratisation and peace building.

Moreover, ICCO & Kerk in Actie bring people in the Netherlands and in developing countries into contact with each other. We work in close cooperation with

social organisations, including those involved with development and education, and with the business community. ICCO & Kerk in Actie help people in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe to achieve a proper existence and economic independence.

Colophon

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1 Introduction

Food security occupies a central place in the world-wide struggle against poverty—where hungry people lack the energy to make a living and poor people often do not have the resources to buy or grow their food. Women face a double burden. They have specific nutritional needs because of child bearing and raising, while also forming a larger proportion of those living in extreme poverty and often have, within households, less access to adequate food—something to which children are also especially vulnerable.

Apart from the individual dimension of hunger, food insecurity also has local, national and international ones. Trade, environmental degradation, political disadvantage or war—these all influence people's access to food.

To support the right to food for all, ICCO & Kerk in Actie have been backing food security programmes for many years. Based on their experiences, ICCO & Kerk in Actie have formulated a food security policy for 2007-2010. This policy is an integral part of the 2007-2010 operation plan for the ICCO Alliance, a cooperation of the Dutch development organisations Edukans, Kerk in Actie, Oikocredit, Prisma, Share People and ICCO. In the 2007-2010 operation plan, Access to basic services, Sustainable fair economic development and Democratisation and peace building are mentioned as the three main themes of involvement. Food security comes under the theme Access to basic services, which also includes education, health, water and HIV/Aids.

2 What food security is

Food security

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy life.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity exists when people are undernourished as a result of the physical unavailability of food, their lack of social or economic access to adequate food, and/or inadequate food utilisation.

Household food security

Household food security is the application of the food security concept at family level with individuals within households as the focus of concern. Realising household food security has three cornerstones: sufficient availability of food, adequate access to food and proper utilisation of food. The specific role of women is important in each of these.

Sufficient availability of food

Sufficient food for households must be made available through local production or importation of food. In most developing countries, women play a crucial role in agricultural production.

Adequate access to food

All households and all individuals within households must be able to obtain appropriate food for a diet nutritious enough to meet their food needs. This can be realised through own production of food and/or through generating sufficient income to purchase food. Women and girls often have less access to food usually as a result of lack of access to income and social and cultural beliefs and practices or a combination of the two.

Proper utilisation of food

Only a healthy human body has the capacity to use consumed food efficiently and transform it into energy and nutrients that are either stored or used to undertake daily activities. Utilisation of food brings down food security at individual level and underlines the importance of special attention paid to the needs of vulnerable groups such as children and women. Apart from their role in the distribution of food and the care of children, women have specific nutritional needs, especially during pregnancy and breast feeding.

3 Global analysis

Currently over 850 million people live in a situation of food insecurity. Most of them inhabit rural areas and depend directly on agriculture for their living. The international community has paid ample attention to food security over the last decades. The right to food was mentioned in the universal declaration of human rights as early as 1948; the first World Food Summit was held in 1974, and in 1995 the right to food was recognized as a human right under international law, as set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, thus implying the right of every human being to the means of production or procurement of food of sufficient quantity and quality, free from adverse substances and culturally acceptable. As one of the Millennium Development Goals, the international community agreed in 2000 to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015.

The historic trend of continuously falling food prices stopped in 2001, followed by a price increase that has been particularly steep since 2006. This situation has pushed back a large group of people into poverty and food insecurity. This strong increase in prices is the result of a combination of factors: a stepped-up demand in burgeoning economies like China and India, the growing competition between the use of food crops for human consumption, animal feed and biofuels, lower availability as a result of poor harvests in major producing countries, and

food speculation. The poor and net food-importing countries especially suffer from this situation. The international community now doubts if the second sub-goal of MDG–halving hunger–will be met.

Whereas millions of people do not have sufficient food, the negative effects of the abundance of food consumption have become a major health problem for many others. And yet, hunger is not simply a distribution problem. It is mostly a consequence of inequalities and imbalances at national and international level, such as poor emphasis on the development of agriculture in low-potential areas, unequal distribution of land and other resources, unbalanced emphasis on cash crops for export compared to food crops, inefficient markets for food crops, unfair international trade agreements and distortion of national markets by subsidised agricultural exports or dumping of food through food aid. Natural disasters, nowadays increased by climate change and man-made calamities like war, also contribute to food insecurity. The displacement of people and disruption of agricultural production and food distribution leave millions of people at risk to hunger and famine. In order to remove the underlying unfair distribution of wealth and resources that sustains food insecurity in the world, drastic changes are required in international and national policies and a wide range of concrete programmes needs to be implemented.

4 Current involvement

The involvement in food security of ICCO & Kerk in Actie has had a history of over 40 years. The guiding principle of ICCO & Kerk in Actie's involvement in food security has been the right-based approach. This approach identifies the most vulnerable groups, seeks people's participation and promotes good governance–meaning that it empowers local communities to participate in decision making and holds the state accountable for its obligations. Food security programmes supported by ICCO & Kerk in Actie are implemented by local non-governmental organisations. Most food security programmes follow an integrated approach and focus on households.

Within such programmes, attention is not only given to different aspects of food security, such as the right to food and food sovereignty, but also to underlying factors such as agricultural development, access to land, control over means of production, gender and civil society building. If so needed in emergency situations, food aid is provided.

Since food insecurity has clear international dimensions, ICCO & Kerk in Actie are also involved in international lobby and advocacy. An example of this is the joint lobby with Southern partner organisations against the European export of frozen chickens to Africa. This export disturbs local African markets

and takes away economic opportunities of local farmers. ICCO & Kerk in Actie also work together with networks like Aproved and knowledge centres such as Wageningen University and Research Centre. Over the period 2003-2006, food security programmes were supported for an amount of euro 60,000,000.

The food security policy for 2007-2010 builds upon this gained experience but also involves new dimensions such as programme instead of project support, the linking of programmes with other actors and increased attention paid to the proper utilisation of food at household level.

5 Food security policy

5.1 Food security mission

To assist poor and food-insecure populations in claiming and upholding their human right to food.

5.2 Food security objectives for 2007-2010

In the 2007-2010 operation plan the following food security objectives are set forth:

1. Improved food security of the most vulnerable groups.
2. The voice of vulnerable people is heard in policy making.
3. Governments assume their responsibility in the realization of the right to food for all.

5.3 Realising food security objectives

To realise the (general) objectives of the 2007-2010 operation plan, three strategies are used: poverty alleviation, civil society strengthening, lobby and advocacy. The strategies are implemented through interventions such as financial support to partner organisations, strategic financing (programmes with different stakeholders), intermediation, capacity development, and strengthening public and private support in the North. These general strategies and interventions are also used to realise the three food security objectives.

5.3.1 Improved food security of the most vulnerable groups

Sufficient availability of food for households

The direct availability of food for households is increased through support to programmes that realise the ecological sustainable improvement of agriculture. This results in an increase of yields and a decrease in the risk of crop failure.

Since climate change remains a direct threat to food security, innovative measures must be taken to adapt to this change and constitute an important part of such agricultural programmes. Depending on the local context, the programmes consist of activities like soil and

water management, optimal use of agricultural inputs, better agricultural practices, diversification of cropping patterns, intensification of agriculture, more efficient storage and improved marketing of surplus. Diversification of cropping patterns can also include growing of cash crops.

Gender is important since 80% of the agricultural production in developing countries is realised by women. Female-headed households require specific attention as they belong to the most vulnerable groups.

Adequate access to food for households

Adequate access to food that is available on the (local) market can be realised through interventions that support diversification of the sources of income. This ensures a more stable, increased income and improves the food-purchasing capacity of a household. Promoting access to markets for the purpose of selling own production and improving the negotiating position of producers in the market are also important. Such elements can be linked and strengthened with programmes for Sustainable fair economic development, another main theme of the 2007-2010 operation plan. Adequate access to food at household level does not automatically result in equal access to food for all members of a household—women and girls often have less access to food than men and boys. Aiming at equal distribution of food within households—by strengthening the position of women and girls—needs to be part of any food security programme.

Proper utilisation of food

Proper utilisation of food is required to realise food security for the individual members of the households and refers to nutrition security. Again, special attention must be given to women and children since they have specific nutritional needs.

Realising proper utilisation of food is directly linked with most of the other themes under Access to basic

services. One such example is health care, since a sick person is not able to utilise food effectively and also because a well-balanced diet prevents diseases. Complementary measures in the area of safe drinking water and sanitation are also essential. Education (especially of girls and women) is strongly associated with better nutritional status of their children. People living with HIV/Aids require special attention, for if they are properly fed, the disease slows down and the efficiency of medication increases.

Food aid and vulnerability to disasters

The risk of food insecurity or being at risk to food insecurity is what people face in many emergency situations. But in most cases the emergency simply expresses the conditions already existing and only aggravates the vulnerability of the people concerned. Therefore, in most food security programmes, attention is being paid to disaster preparedness and early warning systems. If in acute emergency situations, analysis indicates that food aid is the appropriate response, ICCO & Kerk in Actie will provide such support. Act International, of which ICCO & Kerk in Actie are a member, is an important partner in this process. However, food aid programmes should not just meet short-term needs –they should also contribute to the restoration of long-term food security. Transition of food aid into structural food security programmes is therefore a crucial element of the support ICCO & Kerk in Actie provide in emergency situations. Within food aid programmes, people should be given the means enabling them to return to normalcy as soon as possible. This prevents them from becoming dependent on food aid. The need for food aid can also be limited through supporting programmes aiming at risk management of disasters. Such programmes include activities such as an early warning system– including risk mapping, strengthening the capacities of local communities to reduce their vulnerability, and prevention of conflicts.

5.3.2 The voice of vulnerable people is heard in policy making

Although policy making aimed at vulnerable people directly affects their lives, their voices are not often heard during the formulation and articulation of these policies. To make these voices heard, ICCO & Kerk in Actie actively promote and support the organisation of communities as well as networks of organisations that represent the interests of these groups. In food security networks, participants can be target-group organisations, farmers’

cooperatives, peasant movements and consumer organisations. Capacity building and intermediation between these groups are important interventions.

Capacity development enables participants to claim such democratic rights as that of legal security; for example, the content and just implementation of land reform and water laws is crucial to ensure access to land and water for the most vulnerable groups. Intermediation, in the form of sharing, analysing and systemising knowledge and experiences on an equal basis, provides opportunities for strengthening the capacity of all participants in the food security networks and will lead to further development of strategies and methods for operating effectively.

Conflict transformation through strong local networks is important because the increased scarcity of productive resources such as land and water often results in conflicts. As such, the food security policy is directly linked with another main theme of the 2007-2010 operational plan: Democratisation and peace building.

5.3.3 Governments promote the right to food for all

(Local) governments and other duty bearers should not only know the right to food but also their duties in regard to respecting, protecting and promoting the right to food. Imbalanced power relations resulting in unfair production and trade systems–agricultural and export subsidies in rich countries, dumping of excess of production through food aid, import barriers for third world farmers, unsustainable production of fodder in developing countries and more recently, the unsustainable production of biofuels–are aspects of a system that benefits the rich countries and hampers the prospects of (especially smaller) farmers and food security in developing countries. In order to alter this situation, we need to create an enabling environment which respects, protects and promotes the right to food. Food sovereignty is the policy space wherein countries determine their food and agricultural policies. If these policies are used to realize the right to food for all, then food sovereignty becomes this enabling environment. To realise increased attention by especially (local) governments to the right to food and food sovereignty, ICCO & Kerk in Actie focus on intermediation and capacity development. The participation of organisations in the South and in the North will be intensified. Lobby interventions will focus on promoting the right to food. Current issues demanding urgent attention are international and regional trade agreements, the increased production of bio-energy and the use of food crops as biofuels.

6 Programmes and resources

Africa

In West Africa (e.g. in Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali), support is given to programmes that focus on integrated sustainable agricultural development, water management, environmental restoration, and improving the nutritional status of mother and child.

In the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia), the focus is on small-scale irrigation, improvement of livestock and mother-and-child nutrition.

In Southern Africa (e.g. Madagascar, South Africa, Malawi), the emphasis lies on issues such as access to land, diversification of income and of food crop production, diversification of food and diet base, promoting the use of small-scale irrigation techniques, improvement of livestock production and utilisation, soil and water conservation. Special attention is given to the impact of HIV/Aids on food security.

In post-conflict countries (DR Congo, South Sudan, North of Uganda), the focus is primarily on the transition from food aid to food security and improving food security for IDPs.

For food security programmes in Africa, an amount of euro 22,400,000 is allocated in the 2007-2010 operation plan.

Asia

In Asia, food security programmes are implemented in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, while possibilities for Myanmar and Afghanistan are currently being investigated. Supported programmes include agricultural development, homestead gardening, networking and lobby for the right to food and land. In Bangladesh, ecological production is being integrated in several programs. Raising livestock and engaging in poultry and fish are important income sources and supplement the diet base.

For food security programmes in Asia, an amount of euro 23,900,000 is allocated in the 2007-2010 operation plan.

Latin America

In the Andes region, the focus is on promoting the right to food and food sovereignty, with a strong emphasis on capacity building and systematisation of the best practices.

In Haiti, a food security network and programmes centring on agricultural production, soil and water conservation and diversification are supported. For food security programmes in Latin America, an amount of euro 4,700,000 is allocated in the 2007-2010 operation plan.

Capacity building is an important element throughout the programmes and is achieved through the collaboration of (external) experts and systematisation of lessons learned.

In all programmes, partner organisations are stimulated to complement each other's activities and to collaborate wherever and whenever possible; synergies with relevant governments programmes are also sought in order to promote sustainability of the results. In the north, ICCO & Kerk in Actie are already participating in food security networks such as the European Food Security Group, and the food security, trade and gender group (Aprodev) and collaborating with organisations like Fairfood, FIAN and Wageningen University. Initiatives are taken to broaden and strengthen the linkages with FIAN and Wageningen University in particular.

To attain a multiplier effect through an increase in the financial resources for food security programmes, collaboration is sought with like-minded organisations or through the use of funds available from international institutions or donor agencies.

7 Monitoring the progress

For each of the food security objectives, the 2007-2010 operation plan provides precise information about all the expected outputs, outcomes and effects of the theme food security. Examples of outcomes are:

- The availability of food is increased in 90% of the participating households.
- At least 80% of the partner organisations in the focus countries are in regular contact with other organisations working on food security.
- The right to food will be incorporated into policy documents in at least four countries.

Incorporation into locally-used monitoring systems of food security programmes of indicators such as household food insecurity access scale, household dietary diversity score and production system diversity score will be used to measure the progress at household level.

These are the kinds of concrete targets and indicators that make it possible to closely monitor the progress of the food security programme of ICCO & Kerk in Actie.



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