

Decent Work for Food Security

An ILO Sectoral Programme

A well-functioning food system is fundamental to ensure sufficient, affordable, safe and healthy food. Many workers contribute to feeding the world; others depend on an income to feed themselves. Workers are critical for making the food system work. However, from production to consumption, they face many decent work challenges. In line with the ILO's mandate, this Sectoral Programme aims to reduce food insecurity by promoting decent and productive work in critical economic sectors and implementing integrated policies across the food system.

FOOD SECURITY: AN ILO PRIORITY

Food security is a human right. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. From an ILO perspective, this definition encompasses the ability of workers and their families to build sustainable livelihoods through decent work.

In 2008, the International Labour Conference adopted a Resolution concerning the ILO's role in tackling the global food crisis. In response, an international technical workshop recommended that “the ILO identify areas where its unique mandate and specific expertise could strengthen existing UN efforts in this area”.

Since it became a member of the United Nations High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) in June 2009, the ILO has contributed to the development and implementation of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA). The Summary of the UCFA (August 2011) advocates for a twin-track approach by acknowledging the need to: (i) address the immediate food and nutritional needs of those most at risk; and (ii) build longer-term resilience by eliminating the root causes of food insecurity. The document highlights the fact 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.

“For many women, men and families, decent and productive work is the principal path out of poverty and hunger.”

Juan Somavia, ILO Director General

Facts and Challenges

- Close to one billion people globally suffer from chronic hunger.
- The current trend of unprecedented increase in food prices means more hunger, poverty, unemployment, social unrest, and political instability.
- The global food crisis poses a serious challenge to the achievement of the MDGs, especially MDG1 on eradicating poverty and hunger and providing decent work for all.
- With the world's population forecast to reach 9 billion by 2050, together with climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization, new trading patterns and continuing high unemployment, the challenge of achieving food security will be exacerbated.



WHY IS THE DECENT WORK AGENDA CRITICAL FOR FOOD SECURITY?

Since production and food purchasing capacity are both rooted in employment, the Decent Work Agenda is central to strategies to achieve food security.

Rights: Moving out of poverty and building sustainable livelihoods requires the application of International Labour Standards, including the promotion of freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, as well as the elimination of child labour, forced labour and all forms of discrimination in the workplace. The issue of gender is of particular importance, as in many countries women still face both legal and practical impediments in asserting their rights. Indigenous communities, minority groups, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and other groups who often face discrimination and social exclusion in terms of access to productive resources and decent work, are among the most vulnerable to food price spikes.

Employment: Decent jobs can accelerate economic growth, stimulate food production, processing and accessibility, and can provide incomes to allow large parts of the population to exit poverty and to be food-secure. The promotion of decent and green jobs will articulate the way in which food security can be enhanced whilst at the same time protecting the environment and preserving the resources on which the livelihoods depend.

Social Protection is being increasingly recognized as an effective instrument in addressing food insecurity. Social protection schemes that guarantee basic income security and access to essential social services have a direct effect on both consumption and production. Evidence from developing countries has demonstrated that (conditional) cash transfers are mostly spent on food and investments in livestock or agriculture. Increased consumption also supports agricultural demand for local services which has a direct knock-on effect on agricultural production.

Social Dialogue: Workplace participation through collective bargaining secures trust and commitment in employment relations and improves productivity. It can also contribute to investment in training and reducing monitoring costs, thus enhancing efficiency. Effective social dialogue has a positive impact on both production and consumption.

The inclusion in 2005 of Target 1b on “full and productive employment and decent work for all” under MDG1 has acknowledged the fundamental role of decent work in reducing poverty and addressing food insecurity in a sustainable manner.



DECENT WORK FOR FOOD SECURITY: AN ILO SECTORAL PROGRAMME

The ILO, through its Sectoral Activities Department (SECTOR), has developed a holistic, multi-sectoral Decent Work for Food Security (DWFS) programme that works in partnership with other UN agencies and development actors to support its tripartite constituents – governments, employers and workers – to give effect to their national and regional food security strategies and to achieve food security for all.

The unique features of the DWFS Programme are:

- **Focus on the interrelated sectors of the food system:** agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture production; food manufacturing and packaging; transport and storage; trade and retail distribution; as well as food services such as catering. The goal is not 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.
- **“From farm to table” approach:** All elements from production to consumption are covered. The consumption component of the food system focuses on vulnerable workers who do not have access to adequate food and nutrition even though there is no food scarcity in a country or a region. The problem is particularly prominent in urban and peri-urban areas. Sectoral strategies aiming to generate income or to provide safety nets to food-insecure workers contribute to food security and poverty reduction.
- **Multi-disciplinary nature of the Programme:** sectoral activities encompassing the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda reflect close collaboration between SECTOR and other ILO departments.





PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The main elements of the DWFS Programme strategy are:

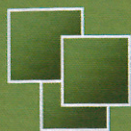
- **A multisectoral diagnostic analysis** examining a country's food system through the lens of the Decent Work Agenda as the basis for informing country-specific Programme activities;
- **Formulation and implementation of national projects** in selected countries tailored to country-specific circumstances and needs and in line with the priorities outlined in the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs);
- **Development and application of global tools to support the implementation of activities**, with a focus on knowledge sharing of replicable solutions to those decent work challenges that negatively impact food security;
- **Active involvement of ILO tripartite constituents** at global and national levels to advise policy and programme development and at local level to participate in implementation.

The ILO's sectoral initiatives on food security

- In 2008, the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference adopted the Resolution and Conclusions concerning promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, which provide a decent work framework for addressing the challenges of rural employment, food insecurity and poverty reduction.
- Since 2009, the ILO has been a member of the UN HLTF. Represented by the Sectoral Activities Department, the ILO contributes by promoting productive and decent work as part of the HLTF's Comprehensive Framework for Action.
- Under the auspices of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), in 2011, the ILO co-led, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, the preparation of the "Guidance note on integrating food and nutrition security into country analysis and UNDAF (A guide for UNCTs)".
- Six countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania - have been identified for the implementation of the DWFS Programme. Initial activities have been carried out in a number of these countries.
- In August 2011, the ILO organized a workshop, entitled "Decent Work and Food Security" in Mombasa, Kenya. It aimed at assisting the ILO tripartite constituents in developing recommendations on employment and decent work to the Draft National Food Security and Nutrition Policy (February 2009) and national action plan on food security.

FOOD SECURITY AND DECENT WORK ACROSS THE FOOD VALUE CHAIN





DECENT WORK IN THE FOOD VALUE CHAIN: A SECTORAL APPROACH

The “Decent Work for Food Security” Programme (DWFS) supports tripartite sectoral constituents in promoting food security by strengthening their capacity, inter alia, to:

Create decent and potentially ‘green’ jobs throughout the food system and improve working conditions to foster productivity in 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 and the development of cooperatives and other types of associations (mutual benefit societies, mutual aid groups, social enterprises, etc).



Food Security: The Need for Collective Action

Decent jobs and social protection are fundamental prerequisites for a better functioning food value chain and food security. Yet there are many policy issues that affect food security but are beyond the ILO's mandate. Coordination and cooperation across the multilateral system is essential to ensure an effective functioning of the whole food system. In this context, the DWFS works to ensure that there is a coherent engagement with key stakeholders by exploring strategic partnerships and building upon existing initiatives with members of the UN HLTF and the UN System at country level, through UNDAFs and other development frameworks.

Improve workplace safety and health by promoting relevant standards and developing skills and training programmes on food safety and quality standards.

Address decent work challenges in key sectors related to food market access and distribution, including in the areas of transportation, 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.

Improve access to food through social protection by promoting innovative sector-specific social protection schemes with particular focus on vulnerable groups and women.

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