

EcoFair Trade Conference

## **EcoFair rules!**

The new role of agricultural trade within the conflict area of the climate, food, and economic crises

Tuesday, 12 January 2010, 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstrasse 8, 10117 Berlin

A cooperation of Heinrich Böll Foundation and Misereor

### **Conference Background Paper**

By Alicia Kolmans and Armin Paasch

## **World Summit on Food Security 2009 – New international food security regime in sight?**

At the World Food Summit in 1996, governments pledged to halve the number of chronically undernourished people – then 839 million – by 2015<sup>1</sup>. When governments met once again for the World Summit on Food Security in November 2009, the number of people suffering from hunger had for the first time passed the one billion mark. This dramatic trend leaves no room for doubt. The international food security regime has failed. Nor did it fail for the first time in 2007, when global price increases for agricultural commodities and the financial crisis that followed also ruined the rather delicate results that had been achieved in the fight against hunger.

The Final Declaration of the 2009 Summit fails absolutely to reflect this situation. It reiterates old international agreements, omits all self-critical analysis, and touches only superficially – or not at all – on massive new threats such as land acquisitions, biofuels and food commodity speculation. The only chink of light is the fact that the Summit supported the fundamental reform and strengthening of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) agreed on in October 2009. This international committee, which has existed since 1974 and is based at the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), was mandated by the World Food Summit in 1996 to coordinate and monitor implementation of the action plan to halve the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015. So far, CFS has fallen far short of discharging this mandate (Windfuhr, 2009). It is now envisaged that the reformed CFS will be developed into the key international body for steering international food security policy. All actors involved in the food system, and especially the organisations of those people who themselves suffer from hunger, are for the first time to be given extensive rights to also articulate their concerns and participate in the relevant decision-making processes.

---

<sup>1</sup> The period of reference was 1990 to 1992.

The consensus within the Civil Society Forum that took place parallel to the Summit, which pledged to work in support of CFS, was that this presents a major opportunity. But will the reformed CFS succeed in achieving its inclusive and participatory objectives? Can it succeed in improving the food security regime and upholding the human right to food by providing more coordination, coherence, transparency, participation and accountability? And what would be the preconditions for this?

## **1. Fragmented food security regime powerless to fight hunger**

Pursuant to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that came into force in 1976, the human right to food is an unconditional entitlement of each and every human being. Compliance with the Covenant is monitored by a UN committee of independent experts – the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

Yet while the UN human rights system urges all actors to uphold the human right to food, other international organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have put international frameworks in place to encourage the opening-up of markets, the dismantling of social protection, the privatisation of agricultural services and an orientation toward exports. These trends have contributed significantly to the exacerbation of hunger. Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, sees in this fragmentation of the international food security regime a key obstacle to waging an effective fight against hunger (De Schutter, 2009).

Even in the midst of the acute food security crisis ongoing since 2007, CFS has lacked the leverage to translate into practice the theoretical primacy of human rights (Brock and Paasch, 2009). Nor were the declarations of the UN Human Rights Committee incorporated into the international programmes to tackle the crisis. Nor did the responsible UN organisation, FAO, succeed in assuming a lead role in managing the crisis.

To improve the coordination of international programmes to tackle the hunger crisis, in 2008 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon initiated a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HTLF). As well as the UN Organisations dealing with food security issues, this body also included representatives of the World Bank, IMF and WTO. It is problematic that this task force included neither governments of the countries affected by hunger, nor their parliaments, nor civil society organisations. This problem is also reflected in the orientation of the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) developed by the HTLF as a joint strategy for food security. On the one hand the CFA rightly recommends stepping-up the promotion of agriculture and social systems in developing countries, yet on the other hand it retains an unswerving commitment to strategies such as opening-up markets and raising productivity, and ignores structural causes of poverty such as unjust land allocation (FIAN, 2008).

A further coordination initiative was launched by the G8 and G20, for whom the food security crisis became a focal theme. At their Summit in Japan in 2008 the G8 launched their vision of a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS). In this spirit, at their Summit in L'Aquila in 2009 they promised to make available USD 20 billion for agriculture and food security in developing countries over the following three years. At the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh in September 2009 the World Bank was mandated to develop a proposal for a multilateral trust fund to strengthen agriculture in poor countries. The aim of the Global Partnership is also to improve the coordination of food security and agricultural policy at the international level. The nature of the envisaged relationship between GPAFS and the reformed CFS remains unclear, however. Although the CFS is referred to

in the Summit Declaration as a 'central component' of GPAFS, it is not mentioned in the parallel debate on the funding of the Global Partnership.

## 2. The reform of CFS – a participatory forum for steering global food security policy

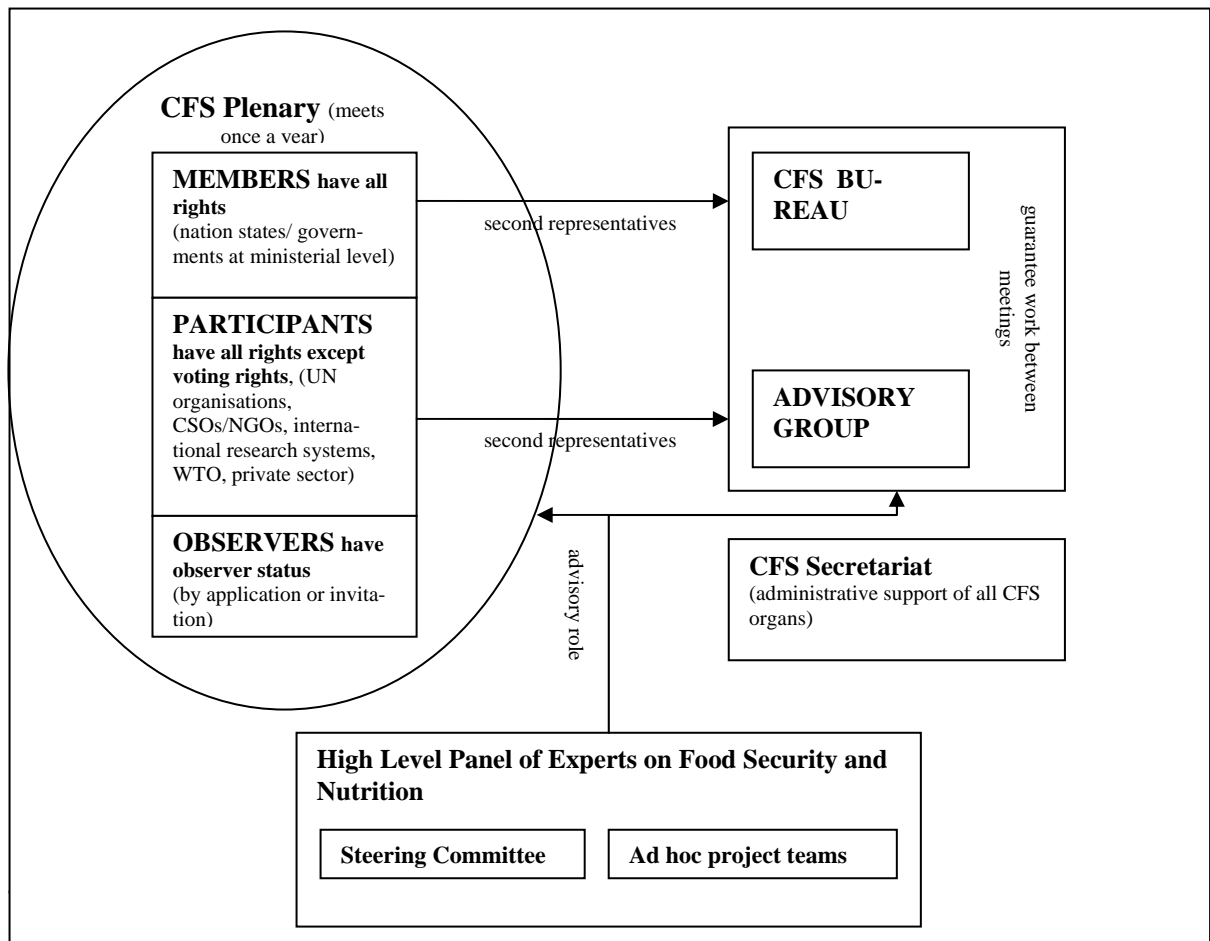
The reform of CFS, which was decided on in October 2009 and reaffirmed at the World Summit on Food Security in November 2009, pursues ambitious objectives. The official vision of the reformed CFS is 'a world free from hunger where countries implement the voluntary guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security'.<sup>1</sup> It is envisaged that a global strategic framework to be developed in the medium term will provide key orientation for agricultural and food security policy.

One key objective formulated for the reform is that all the relevant actors – especially those stakeholders most affected by hunger – be involved in the CFS as 'participants'. Among the stakeholders mentioned explicitly are small farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, herders/pastoralists, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers and indigenous peoples. The distinctive feature of this newly created structure is its aspiration to achieve inclusivity and participation. The three key guiding principles of the new CFS are 'inclusiveness', 'strong linkages to the field' and 'flexibility in implementation'.

<b>Tasks of the international Committee on World Food Security, phases I and II</b>	
Perform coordination at the global level	as a platform for exchange and coordination among all actors
Promote policy coherence	inter alia by developing international strategies and voluntary guidelines for food security
Deliver support and advice to countries and regions	upon request by countries and regions, support implementation of their strategies to fight hunger, and support practical implementation of the voluntary guidelines on the right to food
Perform coordination at the national and regional levels	building on existing structures and relationships with key stakeholders at all levels
Promote accountability and the exchange of best practices at all levels	inter alia by developing innovative monitoring mechanisms
Develop a global strategic framework for food security	as a guideline for synchronised action by a broad range of actors. On the basis of existing frameworks (e.g. CFA, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the FAO voluntary guidelines on the right to food)

As well as representatives of the aforementioned civil society organisations, the 'participants' will also include relevant UN organisations, international NGOs, international research systems, the World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, WTO, private-sector associations and representatives of philanthropic foundations. Voting and ultimate decision-making remain the exclusive prerogative of 'members', which is to say the member states of FAO and the United Nations.

To ensure that the work of CFS is supported by a sound information base, the Committee will have access to a High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE). This will comprise a group of 10-15 internationally recognised experts on food security, who will each be appointed for a two-year period.



(authors' own graphic)

The issue of who decides on strategies for food security and agriculture is key to the fight against hunger. The fact that food security policy in recent years has failed, is due in considerable measure to its lack of responsiveness to stakeholder interests. This is why the scope for participation by civil society organisations being created by CFS is highly significant. The process of discussion leading up to the reform of CFS already involved an extraordinarily high level of civil society participation. Representatives of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), *La Via Campesina*, Oxfam, Action Aid and the ad hoc group of international NGOs were members of the so-called 'contact group', in which the reform was prepared over an eight-month period.

Whether CFS can respond successfully to these major challenges will depend on the financial resources allocated to it, the political authority associated with that, the orientation of the planned 'global strategic framework', the monitoring mechanisms, and who is appointed to the various bodies.

### 3. Can the reform live up to its aspirations?

Unfortunately, so far there is good reason to doubt whether the financially strong states really do wish to make CFS into a central organ for steering international food security and agricultural policy. For this, CFS would require sound funding and institutionalised influence on the programmes of other international organisations that are relevant to food security. So far, neither of these conditions is met. The Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security makes no mention of the funding of CFS. CFS funding is not even mentioned in the section dealing with investment in agriculture and food security.

Key to the influence of CFS on the actual allocation of funds is the issue of its relationship to the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS), or more specifically the incorporation of CFS into GPAFS. As a political arm of GPAFS – as postulated at the World Summit on Food Security - CFS would need to wield influence over the 'financial arm' of GPAFS. The proposal for a

Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (in the form of a GPAFS trust fund) put forward by the World Bank in October 2009 does not even mention CFS. There is a risk that CFS might degenerate into a playground for participation by developing countries and civil society, while the real decisions shaping agricultural and food security programmes are taken elsewhere.

It is still too early to forecast the likely success of CFS, though. Many key questions were left open at the World Summit on Food Security. Several key elements still have to be put in place during phase I of implementation (which according to the plan of implementation will run from October 2009 to October 2010). These include clarification of the funding base, and the appointments to the key organs of CFS and the HLPE.

Other key questions will not be answered until phase II of implementation, for which a plan of work is to be put forward in October 2010. The quality of the work of CFS will be crucially dependent on the content and significance of the global strategic framework for food security, which will be developed in this second phase. It remains an open question how this strategy can then acquire real influence on corresponding international programmes, such as the provision of the USD 20 billion promised by the G8.

Closely linked to this is the issue of the accountability of the member states, and international organisations such as the World Bank and IMF, toward CFS. Decisions on accountability and monitoring mechanisms will also not be taken until phase II of implementation. Human rights criteria, clear indicators and time schedules, a precise reporting format for states and international organisations and the use of parallel civil society reports are all urgently needed in order to lift CFS out of the valley of insignificance.

Over the coming months and years it will be important not least for the civil society organisations involved in the CFS process to make constructive use of the scope for active participation that will now hopefully be created for them. These organisations will then need to help ensure that the interests of those stakeholder groups most affected by food security are represented legitimately.

The first step of reform toward a new international food security system has been taken. Many more must follow.

## References

Brock, Andrea, and Armin Paasch. 2009. *International Responses to the Food Crisis: Assessment from a Right to Food Perspective*. Heidelberg: FIAN International. <http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/others/international-responses-to-the-food-crisis>

De Schutter, O. 2009. *Governing World Food Security: A New Role for the Committee on World Food Security*. in: Right to Food and Nutrition Watch: Stuttgart, Utrecht and Heidelberg: Bread for the World, ICCO and FIAN International. <http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/rfn-watch/right-to-food-and-nutrition-watch-2009>

FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) International. 2008. *Time for a Human Right to Food Framework of Action*. Position Paper. Heidelberg. <http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/others/time-for-a-human-right-to-food-framework-of-action/pdf>

Windfuhr, M. 2009. *Die Vereinten Nationen im Ernährungsbereich mit neuer Steuerung und Koordination. Reform des VN-Komitees für Welternährungssicherheit ist gelungen*. Fact Sheet zum Welternährungsgipfel. Stuttgart: Bread for the World. [http://www.inkota.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Themen\\_Kampagnen/Ernaehrung\\_und\\_Landwirtschaft/welternahrungsgipfel/Komitee%20Weltern%C3%A4hrung.pdf](http://www.inkota.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Themen_Kampagnen/Ernaehrung_und_Landwirtschaft/welternahrungsgipfel/Komitee%20Weltern%C3%A4hrung.pdf)



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union.

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Misereor and Heinrich Böll Foundation and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union

---

<sup>i</sup> Committee on World Food Security (CFS). 2009. *Reform of the Committee on World Food Security. Final Version*. CFS:2009/2 Rev.2. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/017/k6023e4.pdf>