

SUMMARY

FOOD SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD SYSTEMS

Key Questions for
Finnish Development Policy

Analysis by the Development Policy Committee (DPC),
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DEVELOPMENT
POLICY COMMITTEE

Summary

This analysis by the Development Policy Committee (DPC) addresses current food security issues and their multiple interlinkages, which are central to global development. We focus on themes on which Finland can exert an influence and bear responsibility internationally, especially in relation to the poorest countries and people and groups in the most vulnerable situations. Our aim is to strengthen this dimension in national decision-making, parliamentary debate, and in conducting of sustainable development. We also discuss the role of food security in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and as a challenging subject in different policy areas. Lastly, we make recommendations on how Finland can contribute and play a role in increasing the sustainability of global food security and food systems.

The analysis and recommendations have been prepared by a group of experts drawn from the DPC's affiliates. This publication is the second in a three-part series that examines the emerging challenges of biodiversity, food security and climate change and the interlinkages between and among these concerns.

World food systems need to ensure food security and healthy diets for a growing population without undermining the ecological conditions for food production and by reducing vulnerability to food crises. Globally, food production in terms of calories has roughly kept pace with population growth, but nearly 700 million people still do not have enough to eat. An estimated two billion people in the world did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food in 2019. Vulnerable groups are at greater risk of experiencing food insecurity, which is exacerbated by disasters, conflicts and other crises.

Food production relies on the surrounding natural environment. Nevertheless, current food production poses a serious threat to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem preservation and climate stability. Globally, food production is the single largest contributor to environmental degradation and to exceeding planetary sustainability limits. It also contributes to climate change, as greenhouse gas emissions from food production account for 21–37% of all anthropogenic emissions. In turn, climate change undermines food security and nutrition in many ways, for example by impacting farmers' livelihoods and food quality.

Many people's jobs and livelihoods are linked to different stages of the food chain, but their food security and livelihoods are fairly vulnerable. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. Climate change has already affected the food security of many, for example through the intensification and increase in extreme weather events. Long-term conflicts have also contributed to many people's food insecurity. Population growth, urbanisation and migration from rural areas pose their own challenges to food systems and food security.

Local food systems are increasingly linked to the global food system through increased trade and the global division of labour. But the global linkages between local and regional food systems are highly unequal and the benefits of national trade and division of labour are unevenly distributed. So far, there are no system-level governance mechanisms. Unsustainability is also reflected in regional and local systems. Changes in food systems therefore need to take place at multiple levels, as systemic change requires changes both locally and globally.

Food systems can be managed and directed by international agreements. We hope that Finland will play an active role, for example at the UN World Summit on Food Systems, so that the outcome will promote sustainable change and close the inequality gap between food systems. Finland must also commit to implementing the Summit's Action plan at national and international level. Finland must take an active role in international organisations and negotiation processes in order to strengthen the role of agriculture in adapting to and mitigating climate change and to ensure that the importance of biodiversity for food security is more strongly recognised and taken into account. Finland can and should also profile itself as a "food security diplomat", highlighting the linkages between food security issues and new approaches to strengthening food security.

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According to the new Report on Development Policy, Finland's goal is to strengthen the ability of people in developing countries to produce and obtain safe, healthy and nutritious food. This should also be reflected in funding. But Finland's development cooperation funding for the food security, agriculture and rural development sectors has clearly declined in recent years. The promotion of sustainable food systems and food security must be reflected not only in development policy making but also in funding. This means having a credible and definite plan to increase development funding to the level recommended by the UN and, by extension, to increase funding for the food security, agriculture and rural development sectors.

The DPC publication contains more detailed recommendations to strengthen food security and the sustainability of food systems through Finland's international advocacy, coherent realisation of sustainable development and development cooperation.

