

## 16<sup>th</sup> Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) to be held in 2024

### *Food Systems for Our Future: Joining Forces for a Zero Hunger World*

#### Background paper

Making our food systems fit for the future and implementing the 2030 Agenda will require immense efforts. The 2023 UN Food Systems Summit+2 Stocktaking Moment, held under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, has once again shown this very clearly. The international community, all of us, only have seven years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, according to the latest figures, one person in ten on this planet is suffering from hunger. More than two billion people cannot afford a healthy diet.

Yet in our quest to end hunger and malnutrition across the globe, we are constantly facing new, and ever bigger, obstacles: the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and conflicts. Moreover, the multilateral dialogue is still largely overshadowed by Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine and its consequences for global food security.

With that in mind, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) wants to intensify and add impetus to the international dialogue in the field of agricultural policy by hosting the 2024 GFFA. The conference is designed as a networking event and intended to serve as a constructive, future-oriented platform. Right at the beginning of the new year, the BMEL will underline the urgency of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and above all SDG 2 – Zero Hunger –, by 2030.

How can we make our food systems fit for the future? What concrete measures can we take to combat hunger and malnutrition worldwide more swiftly and more effectively? What lessons can we learn from each other in this regard? These are the issues we want to discuss at the 2024 GFFA. The conference will be focusing on four topics:

## **1. Promoting sustainable production and food sovereignty**

More sustainable food production is a central cornerstone of the necessary transformation of food systems. To achieve this, we need site-specific and long-term solutions that contribute to ensuring food security and providing an adequate income for the farming community without, however, further exacerbating ecological crises. More in-depth research, development and application of innovations is needed. Above all, sustainability-oriented approaches that are well-proven but not yet widely used must be put into practice more vigorously and at a larger scale, together with the local farming community.

In view of the worsening climate crisis, it is becoming more and more crucial to take climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Furthermore, it is of key importance that we protect biodiversity and agro-biodiversity, both of which are existential for the agricultural sector.

At the GFFA, we want to discuss possible activities the ministers responsible for food and agriculture can undertake, jointly and in their respective countries, to ensure that there will be sufficient and adequate food for everyone in the future – without, however, surpassing planetary boundaries. Which agro-ecological approaches have proven effective and what contribution can the organic farming sector make? How can we promote food sovereignty? How can fertiliser supplies be secured and nutrient cycles closed? What approaches are there to support investment and innovation more effectively? How can public funds be used in a more targeted way to help implement the SDGs?

## **2. Supporting resilient and sustainable supply chains**

Open and transparent trade markets as well as smoothly functioning agricultural supply chains contribute to a reliable and varied supply of foods worldwide. Yet the multiple crises we are currently experiencing have revealed a number of unilateral dependencies. Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine and other wars and conflicts, trade restrictions, inflation and market volatility have been disrupting the global supply chains. Owing to the growing world population and the impact of the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, diversified and resilient global, regional and local value chains are becoming ever more important.

In the run-up to the 13<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in February 2024, the GFFA will provide a forum for discussing possible ways of reducing unilateral dependencies through rule-based and inclusive trade and of promoting sustainable and resilient agricultural supply chains. Along the supply chains, how can we give greater market power to producers and to smallholder farmers in particular? How can human rights, climate and the environment be better protected along the supply chains?

### **3. Reducing food loss and food waste**

Reducing food losses and food waste actively contributes to climate change mitigation and global food security: 14 percent of the food produced worldwide is lost after harvesting and on its way to retailers; 17 percent of the global food production is wasted at the retail and consumption levels. This food is no longer available for human consumption and all the resources used for its production – such as water, land, energy, financial resources, labour – have also been unnecessarily wasted. Thus, food losses and waste indirectly contribute to increasing hunger and exacerbating the climate crisis through greenhouse gas production.

Discussions at the GFFA will focus on concrete steps that can be taken at global, regional and local level, involving all stakeholders, to reduce food losses and waste along the production and supply chain from farm to fork. How can we encourage research, education and integrated and need-based production systems, for instance? How to enhance storage and transport and reduce post-harvest food losses? What part should promoting a circular economy play in this regard? What kind of support can be given to consumers to help them reduce food waste? In what way can different stakeholders work together effectively?

### **4. Strengthening vulnerable groups**

An essential precondition for realising the human right to adequate food in the context of national food security is that food is available in sufficient quantities and readily accessible. This is often not the case for vulnerable groups, which are particularly affected by the multiple crises: women, children, young people, indigenous communities, smallholder farmers as well as workers in the agricultural sector, landless farmers and people living on the breadline.

These groups often experience greater difficulties in adequately providing for themselves and gaining access to land, seeds, capital and water. Women, for instance, represent 42 percent of the global workforce in the agricultural sector and account for more than 50 percent of farm labourers in many sub-Saharan African countries. Nevertheless, they have to face discrimination and restrictions when it comes to gaining access to, and holding, land, obtaining loans, financial resources and income as well as education and market access.

This topic is to be discussed during the GFFA with a view to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations' Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food. What agri-food policies can we adopt to improve the access to resources for vulnerable groups? How can vulnerable groups be supported? How can we foster women's participation while at the same time encouraging the participation of young people and indigenous communities? What could help us implement the guidelines and policy recommendations of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) more effectively? What lessons learned are there in this field? What role could food councils play, for example?