

# What is the global partnership for agriculture and food security?

Position paper Coordination SUD  
*Agriculture & Food Working Group*  
May 2009

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**The lack of structure in discussions on the project entitled 'global partnership for agriculture and food security' during the high-level meeting, held in Madrid on January 26/27, did all but enable a calm debate and only added to the confusion. However, this global partnership is a unique opportunity to create a link and bring together policies on an international level. During the discussion process, which began under the umbrella of the United Nations in 2009, it is essential that CSOs, along with their governments, become involved in this debate.**

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In 2008, the intensity of the food crisis shed light on the world's hunger problem. Indeed, with 963 million people affected, almost 1 out of 6 people currently suffers from hunger. The fight against this scourge requires, beyond the well intentioned declarations, a stronger, better organised and more coherent mobilisation of the international community.

At present, such a policy framework, that reunites all actors, does not exist. The framework for global action set out by the United Nations special team, created in April 2008, puts an emphasis on working to coordinate actors in the field on a national level. However, there is no political area on the international level enabling more mutually coherent commercial, agricultural, energetic, financial and environmental policies which would all influence world food security.

### **Reviewing the global partnership project**

The "global partnership" was on everyone's lips during the two day debate in Madrid; however the lack of working documents or any specific discussions on its functioning and its objectives didn't help to clear the confusion. Within this loosely defined "partnership", everyone was able to express their own fears and hopes.

Concerned about a suggested G8 initiative, some Southern countries pleaded for the governing of relevant international institutions to be respected (one country, one voice). Some civil society organisations expressed suspicion towards, what seems to them to be a strategy in favour of agro-industrial firms. A concern that was undoubtedly fuelled by some of the speeches calling for reduced international alliance on seed and fertilizer distribution. However, some voices pleading in favour of a partnership that is exclusively centred on multi-actor actions in the field were heard.

Yet the global partnership project that France proposed on 3 June 2008 during the FAO summit in Rome, has since received a wide response with the international community. Taken up by the European Union (European Council, June 20), the African Union (General Assembly, July 1) and the G8 (July 8 meeting), this initiative was subsequently discussed by the UN General Assembly at the end of September, during the Francophonie Summit in October, and again during the extraordinary FAO conference in Rome in November.

Finally, in Tokyo on November 6/7, the G8 expert group's meeting on 'food security' with David Nabarro, UN special team coordinator, and the participation of international organisations involved, facilitated the drawing up of a consensual text on the main basic principles of the partnership.

In order to facilitate the debate, we propose taking a look at the first global partnership project before specifying the conditions which we feel are indispensable in order to achieve support from the civil society.

### **Three 'pillars' for aligning policies**

The global partnership must be conceivable as a network between international organisations, scientists, donors, States, producer organisations, civil societies, private sectors. It should be put under the remit of the United Nations, who will ensure the right to food and other human rights and initiate the Millennium Development Goals.

Through the support of all of the existing institutions and actors concerned, this partnership should be three dimensional:

1. Political: this first 'pillar' should improve the coherence of international policies which influence world food security. Its coordination should be focused on agricultural, energetic, financial and environmental issues and development aid. Many forums for discussion already exist, none of which, however, put all of the actors concerned around one table. This political area should involve representatives from all actors. States, UN organisations, Bretton Woods institutions, WTO, civil society, producer organisations, NGOs, the private sector, etc. The coordination of this pillar should be entrusted to the UN special team (HLTF).
2. Scientific: This pillar should improve mobilisation and the sharing of all scientific and professional expertise that exists on a global scale just as it does on a local level. It should shed light on long term choices, and clarify knowledge on controversial subjects, address new challenges caused by demographics, climate change, trade liberalisation, increasing inequality, food security, nutritional imbalance, agro-energy... Today, there are many experts groups in existence whose analyses are sometimes complementary, sometimes competitive and representative of particular interests. They don't allow for a shared analysis of the main issues. The FAO received a mandate to draft the terms of reference for this scientific pillar.
3. Financial: This financial pillar should allow for the remobilisation of international financing for agriculture and food security, while respecting the commitments to the effectiveness of aid and appropriation by recipients. On one hand it should allow for the implementation of social protection measures, and on the other hand stimulate the farming industries in the Southern countries by reassigning official development aid, and state budgets in the agricultural sector.

### **The necessary conditions for guaranteeing the value of a global partnership**

The global partnership project, submitted to the consultation process set up by Ban Ki Moon is not fixed and must develop throughout 2009. As French Organisation of international solidarity, we feel that this type of global partnership should meet the following prerequisites:

- In order to have an impact on international choice in terms of food security, it seems essential to unite world leaders at the highest level, over and above actors from the food and farming industry. In this sense, in case the Committee on food security (CFS, today linked to the FAO) ought to become this political pillar, the restructured Committee on food security should be ambitious enough to integrate the overall organisations (including in the decision making process) and attach the CSA at the UN

highest level.

- Participation of the civil society (Producer organisations and NGOs) must be realistic and effective, in all the areas (the 3 pillars), all of the stages of reflection and all the decisions made. The voices of those suffering from food insecurity, or working to fight against hunger and poverty should be heard and taken into consideration in the recommendations.
- The partnership should set out clear and precise orientations in terms of policies for the fight against hunger and poverty intended for international institutions and States. It will therefore look to improve and optimise the actions of different actors and current tools. In order to do this the global partnership must receive a fixed mandate from the Secretary General of the United Nations for the coordination and supervision of existing policies.
- This type of partnership, if different to the traditional functioning of UN institutions (one country, one voice), must be placed under the United Nations remit, who will ensure the application of human rights. The special team's involvement in the running of the process is essential.
- The reference to human rights, notably the right to food, must be the clear back drop of the partnership for food and agriculture.

Family farmers and food producers have long suffered from policies in which they were not taken into consideration, contrary to the efforts of the international community for the fight against hunger. Food insecurity is a consequence of this inconsistency.

The implementation of the global partnership and food security, subject to the conditions set out below, represents a historic opportunity to reshape international politics.

**It is essential that civil society organisations be armed with proposals during the 'consultation process' discussion this year.**

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