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hunger
hilfe

POLICY PAPER

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HUNGER IS DETERMINED IN RURAL AREAS

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE KEY TO FOOD SECURITY

Overview

A 10-point plan of action

923 million people around the world go to bed hungry – and the number is increasing. Paradoxically, hunger is most widespread in regions where food is produced, in rural regions. This should not and need not be the case. Food security for all people is not a utopian vision. In view of the current global food crisis, it is important that we not only focus on the effects of price increases, the boom in biofuels and climate fluctuations, but that we also overcome the structural causes, such as trade distortions, the discrimination of small farmers and rural areas, as well as inadequate education and healthcare systems.

Hunger should not only be tackled symptomatically with numerous individual measures and emergency aid packages. The key causes have to be resolved and understood as a common challenge: politics, business, civil society as a whole and individual citizens all bear a joint responsibility to enforce the right of all humans to food. Development policies, in particular, are now called upon to coordinate short and long-term instruments in agreement with trade, environmental, energy and agricultural policies. From the point of view of Welthungerhilfe, the following 10 points must be observed if hunger is to be successfully eliminated:

- 1. Food aid must always aim at long-term food security: food aid is only the first stage in long-term development measures.*
- 2. Rural development has to become a focal point of development cooperation once again. More money has to be invested in agriculture.*
- 3. The increase in food prices must be seen as an opportunity for developing countries to stimulate their own production and distribution and therefore make rural regions more economically productive and attractive.*
- 4. Greater importance must be attached to agricultural research and training again throughout the world but especially in developing countries. The aim of research is to increase agricultural production, especially for small farmers, in an ecologically compatible and socially just way.*
- 5. Investments in education and healthcare are essential.*
- 6. Internationally valid agreements must ensure that fair trade conditions are created for developing countries.*
- 7. Social security systems have to be promoted in order to protect people in need when crises occur.*
- 8. Biofuel production based on imports from developing countries must be discontinued and reconsidered.*
- 9. Consumers in industrial nations must develop a wider acceptance of higher food prices: fair trade, environment-friendly production and climate protection are expensive.*
- 10. The potential of non-government organisations has to be further exploited.*

Introduction

In only a short time, the number of hungry people has increased by 75 million. More and more poor people around the world have to go without one or two meals every day. They cannot afford to pay the drastically increased food prices, and go from a state of poverty to one of hunger. The number of hungry people throughout the world has reached a new dramatic record of 923 million – a figure that has not been recorded in a quarter of a century (FAO 2008). The reason for the increase in food prices is the high oil price, which makes agricultural production more expensive. With the growth in the global population comes an increase in the demand for food, and growing prosperity also boosts the demand for high-quality foods, such as meat and dairy products. The demand for energy crops to produce fuel is also causing prices to soar. In addition, crop failures caused by climate change are leading to shortages of staple foods. This surge in food prices has prompted people in numerous developing countries to protest, and attention has been attracted all over the world to the global hunger crisis. The still unresolved problem of hunger and malnutrition is back on the political agenda again at last.

The international community of states and governments of developing countries have to take action. Immediate measures, such as food aid and the provision of seed and fertiliser, are not long-term solutions: they merely relieve symptoms, but do not eliminate the structural causes. The agricultural potential of developing countries has by no means been exhausted, especially in Africa. As consumers in industrial nations, we have a responsibility to help poor people in developing countries generate more income and therefore achieve greater food security. The increased food prices have different effects: while consumers suffer from higher prices, they offer farmers an opportunity to achieve higher incomes. Agriculture is profitable again, it is worth investing in. Small farmers in developing countries, however, are forced to buy additional supplies of food because their farmland and crop yields are too small. In the short term, they therefore suffer from high food prices as much as consumers in towns. In the long term, however, higher food prices offer them a chance to earn a better income. But policymakers on a national and international level have to focus on agriculture and food security in rural regions and face up to the responsibility to fulfil the human right to food.

1. Food aid is only initial aid

Food aid must always aim at long-term food security: food aid is only the first stage in long-term development measures. According to the principle of helping people help themselves, short-term food aid should lead to sustainable self-sufficiency. Emergency aid has to be followed by reconstruction, which in turn is followed by long-term development promotion. In connection with food aid, employment schemes and welfare programmes (such as food for work) have to be developed to improve rural infrastructure (roads, wells etc.), to increase crops and to develop new markets on a long-term basis. Food aid should not undermine local markets, but should always be purchased locally whenever necessary and possible.

Emergency relief and humanitarian aid are aimed at people who are left destitute by natural disasters or war and conflict. To guarantee their survival, short-term food and other relief supplies, such as tents and clothing, may have to be provided at promptly and unbureaucratically.

In direct response to increasing global famine caused by soaring food prices, numerous national and international immediate relief programmes were set up in 2008 to provide food, seed and fertilisers. These efforts are essential for relieving immediate distress. However, such efforts can only have a sustainable effect if they are linked to long-term development measures for food security according to the principle "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development" (LRRD). In the medium term, people should be encouraged to assume responsibility for their own material livelihood (*ownership*). This is why relief supplies should be purchased primarily in the affected regions. In this way, market distortions can be avoided and the local economy stimulated. Apart from supplying relief goods, paid labour, "cash for work", can be organised for the (re)construction of roads, schools and wells. Instead of creating a new dependency, emergency aid can be seen as a way of promoting self-help.

The aim of a concept to overcome the global hunger crisis must be to avoid local food shortages and to mitigate threatening emergencies through precautionary measures in such a way that food aid becomes necessary less and less frequently. In the past, donor countries have not offered developing countries enough help establishing their own ways of avoiding and overcoming disasters. In view of the climate change, development cooperation must focus far more strongly on strengthening national and local disaster prevention skills. This includes

developing reliable early-warning systems, which identify increasing food shortages by observing local markets and the nutritional condition of the local population.

Comprehensive support from one coordinating set of hands – ranging from acute disaster management via reconstruction to long-term development programmes – is the best way of overcoming hunger crises in the long term. This means that not only emergency aid concepts are implemented, but that the principle of promoting self-help is guaranteed at all stages. Government and international organisations usually address only one aspect of the LRRD approach. This is why it is difficult to coordinate emergency assignments with follow-up programmes and almost impossible to implement permanent food security concepts. If emergency and development aid is to be more effective in future, not only does the international coordination of development agencies have to be improved in the sense of *aid effectiveness*, but cross-departmental cooperation also has to be organised more coherently.

2. Focusing on agriculture

Rural development has to become a focal point of development cooperation once again. More money has to be invested in agriculture.

Two of every three persons suffering from hunger live in rural regions. That famine is most widespread in areas where food is produced is attributable not least of all to the fact that food farming has been neglected for so many decades in developing countries. Their governments, and the international donor community, in particular, have significantly reduced direct and indirect support of this sector of the economy in the last 20 years. The Washington-based IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) estimates that 20 to 30 percent of international development aid should be invested in agriculture and food security. Development aid urgently needs to be increased by this amount.

Two of three hungry people live in rural regions. These are small and subsistence farmers or landless people who work in farming. The land they farm is too small and their farming methods too rudimentary to cover their own needs much less to produce any notable surplus. Land reforms and the foundation of collectives, which are

needed to increase yields and incomes, have rarely been enforced.

That famine is most widespread in areas where food is produced is attributable not least of all to the fact that food farming has been neglected for so many decades in developing countries. Their governments, and the international donor community, in particular, have significantly reduced direct and indirect support of this sector of the economy in the last 20 years. Trade policies, especially the recently expired agricultural export subsidies of industrial nations, have ensured that there have been no price incentives for food production and that investments in the agricultural sector have not been made. While global agricultural markets were supplied with cheap products and industrial nations made their agricultural production globally competitive with high subsidies and export grants, there was no reason for most developing countries to invest in their national agricultural sector.

The consequence of this is that in many developing countries, the agricultural sector's potential to eliminate hunger has been seriously neglected in the past few decades. If any investments were made in agriculture, these concentrated on export production (coffee, cotton, cocoa, etc.). To meet requirements quantitatively and qualitatively, however, mid-sized and large businesses were supported. For food production on small farms, there were few incentives and few development programmes, with the exception of the efforts of non-government organisations. Price increases for staple foods are now calling this policy into question.

The precarious food situation is further exacerbated by the fact that population growth necessitates a significant increase in food production if all people are to be sufficiently fed in future. Estimates for Sub-Saharan Africa show that food imports will have to double by 2030 unless more money is immediately invested in the agricultural sector. Overcoming hunger is linked to an increase in food production – first and foremost in those regions affected themselves by famine. Global food security has relied for too long on surplus production in industrial countries. The food available on the world market, however, cannot reach hungry people: they are too poor to pay for this food. Hunger is not a problem of food distribution but the result of the uneven distribution of income. The only chance poor people have of escaping the hunger trap is appropriately paid work. And work is most easily generated in underdeveloped countries in farming.

The conclusion is obvious: the first Millennium Goal to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 can only be achieved if the agricultural sector in developing countries

is effectively strengthened. Developing countries must be urged to enforce reforms in agricultural structures so that poor people in rural regions and small farmers working below the subsistence level have access to land, water and other productive resources. In the long term, food security can only be achieved if food farming in developing countries is systematically supported and more money is provided for this purpose – by the developing countries themselves as well as by donors. The focus of development efforts, which has been directed mainly at urban populations in the last few years, must be directed back to rural regions once again. While 17 percent of development aid from the OECD states was invested in agriculture 25 years ago, less than 4 percent was spent on farming in 2007. The IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute 2008) estimates that 20 to 30 percent of international development aid should be invested in agriculture and food security. Development aid urgently needs to be increased by this amount.

3. Eliminating poverty in rural regions

The increase in food prices must be seen as an opportunity for developing countries to stimulate their own production and distribution and therefore make rural regions more economically productive and attractive. Not only donors but in the first instance the governments of developing countries have an obligation to develop and extend agriculture. This means investing in rural infrastructure, promoting farmers' organisations, making access to land and production resources (fertiliser, seed, loans) possible, improving processing and promoting the transport system and storage.

The development strategy of eliminating hunger and poverty by promoting urban areas and the economy has had little positive impact on rural regions. Even decentralisation processes can only contribute towards hunger elimination indirectly and in the long term – if at all. Almost one billion people live in extreme poverty, two thirds of them still live in rural areas. Rural development includes supporting economic power in rural regions – especially that of small farmers – and focusing on resource protection. In rural regions poor people have no reliable access to land and drinking water. Education and healthcare facilities are usually inferior to those offered in towns. The lack of roads or virtually impassable tracks makes it impossible to develop trade structures. The concept of rural development addresses all of these

problems. Depending on local requirements, promoting infrastructure and drinking water supplies may be as much a part of the approach as supporting reforestation, improving farming methods or offering micro loan schemes and education. Measures to eliminate the widespread discrimination of women and girls are equally important. Rural development with a special focus on agriculture and small farmers is the key to overcoming the hunger crisis because

1. the production of more food improves self-sufficiency and the range of products at local markets,
2. the creation of jobs in farming reduces poverty, increases purchasing power and counteracts migration into towns,
3. new sources of income in and outside agriculture offer poor people new prospects: they have more money for food, education and healthcare.

For rural development to be successful, political conditions have to ensure that small-scale farming is profitable and can react to price incentives. Not only donors but in the first instance the governments of developing countries have an obligation to develop and extend agriculture. There is considerable backlog demand, and now is a good time to take advantage of the increase in food prices to stimulate domestic food crop production and distribution and to make disadvantaged rural regions economically more productive and therefore more attractive. Development cooperation projects and programmes can effectively promote rural regions by enforcing land rights, supporting access to loans, production resources (fertilisers, seed), innovations and work capacity, and by making the development of transport infrastructure possible, strengthening local markets and promoting storage systems as well as further education.

Development concepts promoting agriculture and agricultural policies still underestimate the significance of involving women equally, even though they play a key role in farming. Depending on region, up to 80 percent of agricultural work is carried out by women. They guarantee their families' survival. Because of legal, ethnic and cultural norms, however, women in many places are structurally disadvantaged. This discrimination means that 70 percent of almost one billion people suffering from extreme poverty are women. The systematic support of women must become an integral part of agricultural promotion: if the land belongs to women, they can decide themselves what will be planted. With access to micro loans, they can feed their families, their children can attend school, reserves can be built up, and environmental and hunger crises can be overcome more effectively.

4. Research for better crops in developing countries

Greater importance must be attached throughout the world to agricultural research and training again, especially in developing countries. The aim of research must be to increase agricultural production, especially for small farmers, in an environmentally compatible and socially just way. It is important to take into account local farming practices and methods of production. Based upon these methods, solutions for crop-growing and yields that are adapted to the respective region have to be developed by means of research and training. These must fulfil the criteria of sustainability and the principle of promoting self-help.

Overcoming hunger, guaranteeing food security despite high population growth and simultaneously enabling all people to enjoy a healthy and balanced diet to eliminate malnutrition – all this means that food production has to be increased. And dramatically so, because food production is having to compete more and more with non-food farming (biofuels, natural fibres etc). According to the United Nations (2008), food output has to double by 2030 to be able to guarantee food security. A challenge for agriculture that will be difficult to meet unless investments are made in agricultural research. The way forward must be decided today, because from the start of an agricultural research project to implementation of its results in farming practice a period of up to 20 years may pass. In other words, the food security of the next generation depends on investments that are made in research today.

But agricultural research must be planned in such a way that it points to a sustainable way out of the hunger crisis. This cannot be achieved if the emphasis continues to be on high-energy, chemical-intensive industrial agriculture (IAASTD 2008). Only large-scale landowners and investors benefit from extensive, mainly monoculture-based agriculture, but at the expense of the environment. Small farmers with little capital to invest in expensive technology cannot compete because the land they farm is too small. Agricultural research must therefore incorporate local and indigenous knowledge and shift the focus of research to small-scale farming and agro-ecological farming methods in developing countries. Only when intensification of agriculture is self-determined locally and based on ecological principles can it support regional food security according to the principle of

helping people help themselves.

In this context, the use of green genetic engineering is not the way forward. The introduction of patented gene-modified seed makes farmers dependent on manufacturers, it prevents local, independent agricultural research and leads to exorbitantly high prices. Green genetic engineering also prevents farmers from producing their own seed, something that contributes significantly to food security in developing countries. Not least of all, it results in deficits in the natural biodiversity, and this is needed for geographically appropriate farming under changing climatic conditions. Agricultural research must be based on traditional knowledge and local farming techniques: it has to offer solutions that are geared to local production conditions and are also manageable and financially viable for small-scale farmers. This can only be achieved if agricultural research is practiced and financially supported in developing countries.

5. Development is only possible with education and healthcare

Investments in education and healthcare are essential. Improving educational opportunities is one of the most effective ways of eliminating hunger. The higher the level of education, the better a person's nutritional status. Investment in education for women means smaller families and a reduction in population growth. And only healthy people are able to assume responsibility for their own development.

Over 90 million children do not attend school. Two thirds of around 875 million illiterate people worldwide are women (UNICEF 2008). Inadequate education and hunger often go hand in hand: the poor can barely afford food much less school education. Children from the poorest families are denied the right to education: they cannot pay the costs of attending school (fees, uniform, transport, equipment). Increasing food prices compound the situation because many children are now being forced to work to support their families. The demand for "education for all", however, assumes that child labour be abolished.

Even if people could afford to pay school fees for their children, educational opportunities are more limited in rural regions in developing countries than in towns: there is a lack of buildings and teaching staff. The usually inadequately qualified teachers often teach classes with over a hundred pupils. And poor families only send boys

to school. Girls and women are therefore affected most by educational deprivation, even though education is high on the international development agenda: two of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are committed to education: MDG 2 calls for universal primary education, MDG 3 aims to eliminate gender disparity in education.

Improving educational opportunities is one of the most effective ways of fighting hunger because malnutrition decreases in relation to the ability to read and write. Education gives people freedom of action, which allows them to determine their own lives, to practice family planning and avoid hunger and poverty because they have a better chance of finding work.

Investments in education, however, do not have a lasting effect unless health is guaranteed. Health is not only a human right and the basis upon which individuals can develop and exploit their potential. Poor nutrition, lack of hygiene and education, and an inadequate public healthcare system lead to higher maternal and infant mortality rates and a lower life expectancy in developing countries. Over one billion people still have no access to clean drinking water, and 2.6 billion have no sanitary facilities. Medical care is often lacking because there are not enough medical staff, appropriately equipped doctors' surgeries and hospitals, and medication is either unavailable or too expensive.

The cycle of poverty, hunger, lack of education and unreliable healthcare is assuming alarming proportions in the face of HIV/AIDS. For many countries in southern Africa, it is predicted that by 2020, the Aids pandemic will have killed a fifth of the agricultural workforce (WFP HIV/AIDS Unit 2007). Small farmers will be particularly hard hit because the lack of workers means a further drop in their income. Food supplies will also diminish in rural regions, and delivery of food to towns will also be threatened. This foreseeable disaster can only be prevented if sufficient income is generated in rural regions. Money is needed, on the hand, for education, to improve knowledge about protection and precautionary measures. On the other hand, funds are needed for healthcare systems, reliable diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

6. Creating greater equity in international trade

Internationally valid agreements must ensure that fair trade conditions are created for developing countries. To promote agricultural production in developing countries, import restrictions imposed by the EU and other industrial countries on agricultural products from developing countries should be lifted. Moreover, agricultural export subsidies in industrial countries should be completely abolished, irrespective of the outcome of WTO negotiations, so that prices on world markets are not brought down artificially. During a transitional period, poor developing countries should be allowed to protect local agricultural production to increase their competitiveness for the global market. Promoting regional trade helps buffer the impact of regional and seasonal fluctuations.

For decades, industrial nations have sustained their agriculture with production-based subsidies and protective duties, and therefore stimulated production. They have supported the export of surplus with export aid and protected their agricultural markets with customs duties, making market access difficult, if not impossible, for developing countries.

Agriculture and rural regions in the world's poorest countries can only develop if the existing unfair trade systems are broken. The reduction of EU export subsidies is one step in the right direction. As yet, the opportunity to use WTO negotiations to eliminate hunger has not been taken. Equitable international trade can only become reality if it is based on recognised rules and regulations – the WTO has to fulfil this role. The lack of international treaties cannot be replaced by bilateral agreements. The vested economic interests of individual states or groups of states in many cases have priority over the elimination of hunger and poverty. This is shown by current negotiations on European Partnership Agreements (EPA), particularly with regard to Africa: the liberalisation of markets and trade called for by the EU benefits, above all, investors from EU countries. It contributes little to poverty elimination in developing countries. Moreover, the Most Favoured Nation clause provided for in EU agreements means that developing countries are not permitted to conclude any more preferential agreements with other states (e.g. India, China) so that development opportunities are hindered.

The frequently expressed demand for the swift and extensive liberalisation of markets serves, first and foremost, the industrial nations. The weaker markets of

the developing countries and their raw materials can be exploited more easily. But developing countries lose tax revenue (customs) and justifiably fear that their local producers will be forced back. To promote development, liberalisation has to be structured in a very differentiated way. Even if agriculture is now given top priority on the political agenda, it will take years for the agricultural output of neglected rural regions to achieve anywhere near the level of efficiency and quality reached by the industrial nations. To promote their rural regions and to close the huge development gap, developing countries must be allowed to systematically protect their own agricultural markets against imports and, if necessary, subsidise their agriculture. Domestic production, however, has to be protected in accordance with set regulations and a time schedule to avoid undermining the development of the country's economy as a whole.

7. Social protection against the hunger trap

Social security systems have to be promoted in order to protect people in need when crises occur. While citizens of countries such as Germany are protected against absolute poverty by social security systems, crises or crop failures usually mean a free fall into poverty and hunger for people in developing countries. Traditional protection systems relying mainly on solidarity within families are not sufficient. To prevent natural disasters or conflicts ending in hunger crises, precautionary measures have to be taken, for example, through micro-insurance or the introduction of basic social care systems.

While the citizens of Germany and all other industrial nations are protected against absolute poverty by social security systems (retirement and unemployment benefit, social welfare), crises or crop failures represent a serious threat to the lives of poor people in developing countries, one that often ends in hunger and death. Developing countries, in particular, lack minimum protection against poverty and hunger caused by illness, accident or unemployment but also against loss of income caused by crop failure (drought), natural disaster and the death of relatives.

In the majority of developing countries, social protection relies on the solidarity of members of families and village communities. If a family, or indeed an entire village, is struck by disaster, as is the case when food becomes scarce following crop failure, traditional protection

systems soon come up against their limits. Measures that follow on from or improve on such informal safety nets are therefore crucial for survival.

Social protection, which also offers self-help, may be achieved by promoting savings and loan systems and through group insurance. On the one hand, savings and loan systems strengthen the precautionary capacity of poor people in that they save money to be prepared for emergency situations. On the other hand, loans and micro insurance can help people through periods of crisis without their having to sell vital resources, such as oxen.

Extremely poor people are unable to escape the poverty trap on their own because they lack income-earning opportunities. They have to be assisted with state subsidies and cash benefits. The funding of labour-intensive infrastructural measures through *food for work* or *cash for work* can be systematically exploited here. This kind of employment scheme can be organised in such a way that people are introduced to working life and therefore achieve independent income maintenance in the medium term.

8. Biofuels: the energy requirements of developing countries must be satisfied first

Biofuel production based on imports from developing countries to industrial nations must be discontinued and reconsidered. In view of empty granaries and soaring food prices, energy crops should not be allowed to compete with food crop production. The climate protection goals of industrial nations have to be achieved by saving energy, increasing efficiency and finding innovative methods to generate energy in the producer countries. On the other hand, the local use of bioenergy to reduce poverty in rural regions should be promoted.

In recent years, countries in the North have been unable to satisfy their growing demand for biomass for biofuel production with their own production capacities. Germany is not even able to meet the current mandatory biofuel quota of 6.75 percent with domestically produced biofuels. The German Advisory Council on the Environment (2007) estimates that the entire surface area of Germany would have to be used to achieve this. Biofuels or their raw materials are consequently imported from developing and threshold countries.

The consequences of increasing biofuel production in developing countries are already apparent today. The demand for land for primary products, which are usually grown in large-scale monocultures for biofuel crop production, is enormous. This means that land ownership is concentrated on a small number of owners. Water supplies become even more scarce. Conflicts about land and water are the consequence, and fierce competition for land for food production is almost inevitable. Growing demand for agricultural products on the world market is also causing the cost of staple foods to skyrocket. Small farmers in the countries of the South, in particular, are suffering from these developments rather than reaping the benefits of the new demand for agricultural produce. The climate has to be protected by saving energy and improving efficiency in producer countries. Protecting the climate in industrial nations by importing biomass from developing countries is occurring at the expense of food security and means not only a serious violation of the human right to food, it also triggers conflict and unrest. Biofuel production is one of the key causes of rising food prices, and this has prompted violent protests in Haiti, Burkina Faso and Cameroon. The production of second generation biofuels allowing the use of wood and plant residues will also take its toll on soil and water, which are urgently needed for food farming. Until certifications and trade agreements can guarantee that these scenarios will not be continued, the ambitious biofuel plans of industrial nations must be frozen.

But modern bioenergy also opens up new opportunities for rural regions: until now little attention has been paid to their energy supply. To meet the most important requirements, however, energy is indispensable: it is needed to prepare food, to supply water, to cool medication, to run tractors and water pumps as well as for transport. Two billion people still have no access to electricity today. Well over two billion people cook and heat with traditional biomass, such as wood, dung or crop residues. It is too expensive to transport fossil energy to remote regions. Bioenergy, on the other hand, does not depend on central production but can be produced where it is needed: in villages, far from main transport routes and national electricity networks. Supporting local bioenergy facilities not only improves the quality of life, it is also the start of a sustainable local industry and therefore makes an important contribution to rural development. However, this presupposes that bioenergy production is also included in rural development concepts on a local level: only moderate bioenergy production is compatible with food security.

9. There is a price to pay for solidarity and peace

Consumers in industrial nations have to be prepared to pay higher prices for food. Agricultural production must be viable without subsidies, only then can market distortions be reduced and agriculture in developing countries made stronger. Fair trade products, such as coffee or cocoa, can also contribute to the incomes of farmers in developing countries.

Repeatedly denouncing hunger in the world does not resolve the problem. Every person can contribute towards overcoming the global hunger crisis. Politicians have to create fair conditions, businesses have to produce and sell their products according to social and environmental standards. But ultimately, the consumer decides with his buying behaviour whether he tolerates exploitation and hunger or whether he supports fair trade by purchasing products that have been produced according to social standards. But to do this, consumers have to be prepared to pay a higher price, a price that pays off in many respects. Hunger and poverty elimination is the best precautionary measure against crises, conflicts, wars but also migration.

Appropriate prices for agricultural products have been demanded for a long time – by farmers both in the South and in the North. While farmers in most industrial nations are supported with subsidies, their colleagues in developing countries earn their income from market prices. For farmers in developing countries, this has meant they have only been able to compete on the global market with cheap labour or as a result of geographical advantages (e.g. favourable climate for coffee, cocoa, tea). A socially fair agriculture in the North and South can only exist if subsidies and customs taxes are reduced and the same market opportunities are thereby created for all farmers throughout the world.

This can enable producers in developing countries to lead a dignified existence by their own means. Through fair trade relations, living conditions in the countries of the South can be improved, the domestic economy can be strengthened and in the long term, unfair economic structures can be reduced.

The minimum prices and surcharges defined in the fair trade system cover the costs of production and guarantee an absolute minimum living wage. In the long term, however, higher profits must be achieved so that more money can be invested in a sustainable future.

10. Civil society shares a responsibility for development

The potential of non-government organisations has to be further exploited. In emergency situations, they play a key role in overcoming crises – especially when government action is no longer possible. They help farmers organise themselves more effectively, for example in cooperatives. They also represent their interests vis-à-vis governments which frequently disregard the hardships of the rural population. In countries with no functioning government, they take on the tasks of state institutions in rural areas.

Poverty elimination through self-help solutions is often most effectively implemented in practice by private, non-profit-oriented organisations. As non-government organisations (NGOs), they contribute towards public opinion forming processes in their countries, they put forward independent targets to governments and other international institutions and they press for these targets to be met and observed. On the one hand, NGOs are an important corrective body when governments fail to honour their pledges and obligations with regard to the human right to food. On the other, NGOs can also continue to work effectively when government development cooperation lacks public contacts in difficult national contexts. The private development organisations of donor countries can then fall back on a network of local, non-government partners and operate more independently. In view of the global hunger crisis, this network of North and South NGOs can be of crucial importance to aid assignments, because in the countries in which government institutions have collapsed, the distress is often most severe.

NGOs in developing countries make an important contribution towards overcoming hunger. NGOs are responsible, for example, for establishing cooperatives which help farmers organise themselves more effectively and improve production conditions. As farmers' representatives, they campaign for their interests and improve the transfer of knowledge to agricultural know-how. As local NGOs, they organise micro loan schemes and literacy programmes. When the government fails, they often assume responsibility for basic needs in healthcare and education. Promoting NGOs in the South therefore makes a decisive contribution towards long-term poverty alleviation and hunger elimination because NGOs determine their own development work and also assume responsibility for this.

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