



Resolution 1957 (2013)¹

Final version

Food security – a permanent challenge for us all

Parliamentary Assembly

1. On a planet with 7 billion people and abundant natural resources, 1 billion people are hungry or undernourished and, at the same time, 2 billion are overweight or obese. Worldwide, famine kills one person every second and one child dies every five seconds from the consequences of malnutrition. With the economic crisis, food insecurity affects ever more needy people, even in Europe. Overcoming current imbalances will be key to providing sufficient and adequate food, as well as decent living conditions for all human beings.

2. Food is our most basic need and right. If we cannot secure access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for present and future generations, our health, development and fundamental rights will be compromised. However, even though there is no shortage of food in the world, we constantly face food crises, particularly man-made ones. If we fail to address the problems of governance, these will only escalate. The Parliamentary Assembly considers food security as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. This challenge concerns us all and the problems can only be resolved with enough political will and the involvement of citizens.

3. As social inequalities keep widening between and within countries, more solidarity is needed to enhance food security through development policies and strategies, in particular as regards the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, global trade negotiations and consultations on the post-2015 governance framework. Given that sustainable food supplies are increasingly threatened by demographic, environmental and market factors, our collective policy choices affecting food systems must seek a better balance between needs and resources.

4. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the scale of food waste and its impact on our living conditions. Indeed, between 30% and 50% of food in the world is being lost. Nearly half of food still fit for human consumption is thrown away in developed countries, whereas it could, if recovered, help wipe out hunger and malnutrition for nearly 870 million poor people worldwide. The population at large needs to make better informed consumer choices.

5. The demographic boom, together with modifications in people's diets, puts growing pressure on the environment and, ultimately, on food supplies. Climate change, land abuse, chemical pollution and the exhaustion of natural resources in turn harm the quality and quantity of food production. Agriculture will remain central to achieving food security, but it needs to embrace more sustainable practices.

6. The food trade has become a critical link between producers and consumers. However, certain faults in the global trading system, such as speculation, corporate capture and fraud, aggravate the volatility and the level of prices and the diversity and quality of food supplies. This calls for better market regulation and food controls at national and international levels, as well as for measures to guarantee sufficient incomes for farmers. The Assembly also welcomes fair trade initiatives offering social and ecological guarantees to both producers and consumers.

7. The importance of food safety as a vital component of food security should not be underestimated. Recurrent food scandals – worldwide and in Europe – attest to the fact that adulterated, contaminated or sub-standard food not only harms our health, but can also kill. To enhance food safety and to reduce health risks,

1. *Assembly debate* on 3 October 2013 (35th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13302](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Boden). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 3 October 2013 (35th Sitting).

in particular for the most vulnerable population (such as children, pregnant women and sick or allergic persons), the benchmarks on food hazards and labelling requirements for processed foods must be strengthened.

8. In view of the above considerations, the Assembly urges member States to:
 - 8.1. as regards sustainable production of food:
 - 8.1.1. intensify action to combat climate change – for example by concluding a global Kyoto-2 agreement by 2015 – and chemical pollution with a view to better balancing quantity and quality of food supplies;
 - 8.1.2. invest in sustainable farming (including “ecologically intensive” agriculture and organic farming), including through tax and regulatory measures;
 - 8.1.3. accelerate the development of second-generation agrofuels from biomass waste or non-food plants, and in the meantime reduce the use of food crops for making biofuels;
 - 8.2. concerning more responsible consumption of food:
 - 8.2.1. reduce loss and waste throughout food production, distribution and commercialisation systems;
 - 8.2.2. hold national awareness-raising campaigns on the harmful effects of food waste on food security;
 - 8.2.3. provide the public with proper food education so as to promote healthy eating habits and reduce the increasingly widespread problem of excessive weight and obesity;
 - 8.3. with regard to enhancing food safety:
 - 8.3.1. strengthen food controls to better detect economically motivated fraud and irregular substances in the composition of foodstuffs;
 - 8.3.2. ensure that food products are labelled in a transparent, clear and objective way;
 - 8.3.3. increase support for independent research on new or emerging food risks to human health from low-dose but long-term exposure to, notably, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), endocrinal disruptors, nanotechnology and cocktail effects of chemical residues in food, with a view to adjusting the existing reference norms;
 - 8.3.4. ensure that the commercial use of new technologies and chemical substances in the food sector is subject to rigorous scientific examination so as to identify regulatory measures that may be required;
 - 8.3.5. strengthen the legislative framework concerning the sales of energy drinks to children and adolescents, with a view to preventing the adverse effects that these drinks may have on their health and behaviour;
 - 8.4. as concerns affordability of food:
 - 8.4.1. strengthen solidarity mechanisms to combat poverty, which obstructs access to food by the population concerned;
 - 8.4.2. increase development aid devoted to agriculture and improved food preservation, and honour aid commitments entered into;
 - 8.4.3. recognise children as a particularly vulnerable group and take specific measures to avoid them suffering from malnutrition and its devastating effects on their development;
 - 8.4.4. foster food security in fragile countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, by improving small farms’ resilience and rural livelihoods, assisting good regional governance in agriculture and food policies, and enhancing aid to vulnerable populations;
 - 8.4.5. support the minimum human rights principles applicable to large-scale land acquisitions or leases identified by the United Nations Human Rights Council, and seek the broadest geographical coverage for their application through development co-operation programmes and international trade agreements;

- 8.4.6. promote food security by establishing a new universal framework for post-2015, integrating the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- 8.5. in respect of regulatory mechanisms:
 - 8.5.1. ensure full implementation of the human right to adequate food by recognising, in their legislation, the enforceability of this right, together with the related human right of access to clean water;
 - 8.5.2. seek to harmonise the use of the precautionary principle across Europe and beyond in respect of food supplies, with a view to ensuring adequate protection of public health;
 - 8.5.3. support the efforts of the United Nations agencies, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to shield foodstuffs from financial speculation, to stem price volatility of food staples and to promote the establishment of food reserves at national or regional levels, as appropriate;
 - 8.5.4. phase out market-distorting export support for agricultural products and support progress in WTO negotiations on the Doha Round so as to improve food security in developing countries;
 - 8.5.5. ensure that an international climate change agreement in 2015 recognises food security risks and highlights the importance of valuing natural capital in the pursuit of the objectives set out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.