

Hungry for Justice!

Caritas reflection on today's Food Security imperatives in an unsustainable Climate

Following on from the Strategic Framework, “**One Human Family – Zero Poverty**” 2011-2015, the members of the CI Confederation undertook a thorough reflection to analyse the connection between climate change and food security. The reflection addresses the concerns of Caritas organisations about the effects of an “unsustainable climate” on food security. Unsustainable climate is being understood as both adverse climatic conditions induced by climate change and as an unfavourable context created by public policies on agriculture, land, governance, development, global trade, domestic market and industry, which fail to guarantee the right to food for the poorest. Among them small scale food producers are often the poorest and most vulnerable, yet they are the backbone of our food systems.

This reflection¹ follows and builds upon the CI document “**Climate Justice – Seeking for Global Ethic**” (2009) and should orient members in their reflections and actions with regard to the interconnection between the food security and climate change. It upholds the centrality, in all policies, of the equal right to food for everyone. It also underlines that food security bears a spiritual and transcendental value.

The **structural issues affecting the food security-climate change connection**, (i.e. the issues connected with climate change that threaten poor people's right to food), demanding attention from the international community and from Caritas are **agrofuels, land, water, the global food trade and good governance**.

Agrofuels, once considered effective in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and fossil fuel dependency, as well as income-generators for developing countries, are in fact a double-edge sword that has put the world's agriculture under unsustainable pressure. Using arable land to grow crops for fuel means there is less for growing food, which in turn pushes up food prices, out of the reach of poor people. It is often local, indigenous communities who are pushed off their land to make way for agrofuel crops, and who may not even receive a just compensation. Developed countries have created new business opportunities for agro-industries, with ensuing speculation and further marginalisation of small-scale farmers. Agrofuels require the use of strong chemicals, which increase nitrogen-based GHGs, contaminate water, damage soil quality and reduce biodiversity. CI argues the world should gradually abandon large-scale agrofuel production to move instead towards a local, small-scale model of production which would be more sustainable and better ensure the long-term goals of food security, control over land and natural resources, improvement of livelihoods and energy self-sufficiency for farming communities.

A second key element for food security is **land**, which belongs to God and was gratuitously given to mankind to nourish and protect. Yet, the world's demand for land, water and other primary resources has become the cause of stark injustice in developing countries. Too often smallholder farmers cannot make

¹ A longer document has been elaborated as an annex to this document and can be consulted for further details.

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a living because they are denied their rights to land. For poor farmers, being without land means being powerless and deprived of dignity. CI looked at the need for stronger governance of land at national and local levels, to secure land tenure and protect the livelihood of smallholder farmers. A particularly painful phenomenon is land grabbing, whereby land is taken away from local farmers for the benefit of big business investors. Extractive industries bear a large share of responsibility: not only do they take away farmers' means of making a living, they also cause ecological damage and accelerate climate change.

In the face of global warming, sound **water** management is more essential than ever for food security, as the recent food crisis in the Sahel region demonstrates. The CI Confederation is called to engage in advocacy at national and local levels so that the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forestry are implemented, and so that sound Principles on Responsible Agricultural Investment are adopted at UN level.

Thirdly, CI looked at how the **global food trade** is influenced by climate change. When crops are scarce (for example because of drought) food prices rise beyond the reach of the poorest. This is particularly worrying in low-income, food net-importing countries, whose citizens suffer from hunger and malnutrition because of price fluctuations. In times of climate crisis seeds are also scarce, and Genetically Modified Organisms have been seen as the answer to this problem. They raise though a number of questions on independence and sustainability which invite to caution. In response, Caritas has been running adaptation projects especially in those countries most prone to drought, so that farmers can continue cultivating their land and relying on steady yields. Caritas advocates for fair pricing and access to food at all times.

Food security cannot be guaranteed without **good governance** at a national and local level. The 2004 FAO Guidelines on 'the progressive realization of the right to food' affirm that good governance is essential to "empower individuals and civil society to make demands on their governments (...) and ensure accountability" (Guideline 1.2) and it is "an essential factor for sustainable development, poverty and hunger eradication" (Guideline 1.3). CI calls for local communities to be genuinely consulted in decision-making processes, as well as for adequate monitoring and reporting requirements. While States bear the primary responsibility to guarantee the right to food, the principle of civic participation nowadays applies to all sustainable development matters (2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development). Experiences of Caritas' advocacy and cooperation with public authorities to protect rural communities are valid models to follow.

The food security/climate change connection also relates to other aspects, such as equality between women and men, health, social cohesion, stewardship of Creation and forced migration due to climate change.

CI will support the following **key messages for policy and advocacy**:

- The **equal dignity of every person entails the equal right to food for everyone**. We are all called to enhance the well-being of our brothers and sisters in need, ensuring the ability of all people to access food and to fulfill their other basic human needs, in solidarity and according to the principle of subsidiarity.
- The **right to food** must be at the heart of all policy decisions, particularly those on climate change, and the foundation for a reform of global food governance.
- **Small-scale agriculture** and **agro-ecology**, particularly family-based, must be promoted as successful strategies for food security, community adaptation to climate change and mitigation.

Substantial investments must be made in sustainable and agro-ecological small-scale, rural and urban agriculture. Such investments must have a pro-poor focus, increase productivity and enable less wealthy consumers to benefit from lower food prices.

- Smallholder farmers and farmers' organisations must be actively **consulted** in the design and implementation of any decision taken on agriculture under the UNFCCC, related national programmes, and any other processes affecting them.
- The importance of **women** farmers must be stressed and promoted; they must be guaranteed the same access as men to the resources they need – land, livestock, labour, education, financial services and technology.
- Improved systems of food production, stockpiling, distribution and access to local markets can all help to cope with climate change. Such measures should contribute to sustainability and receive financial support mostly from rich countries.
- The issues of **land tenure** and **water conservation** must be addressed, also with a view to eliminating land grabbing. To secure these aims:
 - The FAO *Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* must be fully implemented by governments and by the business community to protect local populations from unfair land deals, ensure transparency and effective civil society participation and conduct preliminary human rights impact assessments. Compulsory accountability frameworks must be put in place, including complaint mechanisms for just reparation in cases of unlawful land grabbing.
 - Caritas organisations should monitor land issues in the countries where they work and raise awareness around land titling.
- All developed countries should establish goals to reduce the production and consumption of **agrofuels**; Caritas calls for a moratorium on imports of agrofuels into developed countries and on subsidies that encourage their large-scale production.
- Long-term adaptation strategies have to be developed at **community level**; in particular, vulnerable farmers in developing countries must have access to the financial and technological assistance required to cope with the impacts of climate change. Priority should be given to planning and investing in integrated water resource management with adequate community involvement.
- Locally-driven initiatives must be supported, especially those promoting **traditional adaptation mechanisms**; good practice exchange and mutual learning should be encouraged.
- Investment in **research and science** involving local communities and building on traditional knowledge is needed to inform adaptation policies and programmes.
- Further research should be conducted to better understand forced migration as a result of climate change and to study in depth the concept of “**climate migrants**”, with a view to providing legal protection for them.

Being aware that all general problems affecting food security (such as food loss and waste, progressive urbanisation, etc.) could not be addressed at once, CI will release dedicated, separate policy briefings during the course of this year.