THE CORDOBA DECLARATION
ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE GOVERNANCE OF THE GLOBAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

Launched on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal declaration of Human Rights[1] | 10 December 2008

CEHAP
CÁTEDRA DE ESTUDIOS SOBRE HAMBRE Y POBREZA

A Call from the Cordoba Group[1] for Coherence and Action on Food Security and Climate Change

(Cordoba, October 4, 2009)

The Cordoba Group is formed by senior experts on hunger, agriculture, agrobiodiversity and human rights, convened in his/her personal capacities by the Chair of Hunger and Poverty Studies, a joint initiative by the University and the Diputacion of Cordoba, Spain.
www.cehap.org

[1] The present Call is based on the 2009 Cordoba Declaration and it has been prepared by the following members (listed alphabetically): ***Carlos Correa,*** *Chair of the CGIAR Committee on Genetic Resources Policy and director of the Centre on Industrial and Economic Law of the University of Buenos Aires;* ***Barbara Ekwall****, Coordinator of the Right to Food Unit, FAO;* ***Asbjørn Eide****, Professor Emeritus at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Food of the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights;* ***José T. Esquinas-Alcázar****, Professor and Director of the Chair of Hunger and Poverty Studies (CEHAP), University of Cordoba****; Andrew Macmillan,*** *former Director of Field Operations, FAO Rome;* ***Miguel Angel Martin-López,*** *Chief of Department, Diputacion de Cordoba, Spain;* ***Luis Miguel Martín****, Professor of Genetics of the University of Cordoba and secretary of the CEHAP;* ***Pat Mooney,*** *Director of the ETC Group and 1985 Right Livelihood Award;* ***Olivier De Schutter****, Professor and Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food of the UN Human Rights Council;* ***Flavio Valente****, Secretary-General of FIAN; and* ***Jose Luis Vivero Pol****, member of the CEHAP, Cordoba.*

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A Call from the Cordoba Group for Coherence and Action on Food Security and Climate Change

The Cordoba Group is meeting in advance of the summits addressing food security and climate change. World food insecurity has been aggravated during the last year, and more than 1 billion people are suffering from hunger. Today´s hunger is not a result of production failure but due to a failure of equitable access to food. The food crisis will be the subject of global attention during the World Food Summit (Rome, November). Simultaneously, the world´s concern over the climate change has deepened and it will be debated at the Climate Change Summit (Copenhagen, December). There is, however, a policy disconnection between these two processes.

The food crisis and its impact on vulnerable groups, particularly children and women, show that excessive reliance on market-based approaches is a mistake. We identified four shortcomings in international policy coherence that could make the present crisis still worse. These are the absence of accountability in the governance of food and agriculture, the gap between policy formulation and budgetary decisions, the lack of effective participation by those who are most affected, and the disconnection between intergovernmental action on climate change and on the food crisis. In this context, we are calling for new initiatives to enable small producers to play a major role in feeding the world in 2050.

The 2008 Cordoba Declaration which recommended a set of strategies for the promotion of the right to food remains as relevant as ever. We wish to remind States of their obligation to use the right to food as the overarching framework as well as a tool to achieve food security for all.

A CALL FOR COHERENCE: MAKING THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM WORK FOR THE HUNGRY

1.- Coherence in Decisions

We welcome the reform process of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). This process should lead to a single intergovernmental forum, at the highest political level, responsible for food security and the progressive realization of the right to food. This forum must become the normative body for international negotiations and it should ensure a stronger coordination among FAO, WFP and IFAD[2]. CGIAR should also join this process. This forum should adopt a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, establish goals and benchmarks, promote transparency and accountability, and monitor the application of the Right to Food Guidelines and the progress towards the fulfillment of states´ and international organizations´ commitments. Governments should take this process as an important step towards an integrated international food management system with a single Program of Work and Budget.

2.- Coherence in Delivery

We welcome the increased international commitment in supporting small-scale producers in developing countries. We are however concerned by the disconnect between the proposal for a new Multilateral Trust Fund under the World Bank and the plans to strengthen global coordination through the reformed CFS. Regardless of the good will intended, this disconnect will create divisions in a time of food crisis. The definition of the priorities on the use of international funding for food security should rest with the reformed CFS. We recommend that Official Development Assistance and private funding for food security be allocated in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action and in harmony with the policy and programme dialogue developed through the reformed CFS. The implementation of these principles presupposes that States adopt national strategies for the realization of the right to food, to which international assistance and cooperation should contribute.

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[2] FAO is the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, WFP is the World Food Programme and IFAD is the International Fund of Agricultural Development. CGIAR is the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research.

3.- Coherence in Dialogue

Within the reformed CFS, we fully support the UN tradition of one country-one vote decision making. However, we also endorse the full participation in the debates of small producers and those affected by food insecurity (small farmers, landless and agricultural workers, pastoralists, fisherfolks, forest keepers, indigenous people, women and consumers). To the fullest extent possible, this participation should be financially supported. Taking into account the importance of women to food security, they must not only be represented through their own organizations but also be actively participating through other civil society organizations.

4.- Coherence in Diplomacy (Rome and Copenhagen)

Governments are currently dealing with food security and climate change with disconnected policy agendas. The Copenhagen negotiations only see input-intensive agriculture in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and as a potential source of carbon credits. Conversely, the Rome negotiations are focused on increasing agricultural production, without giving enough consideration to the impact of climate change or to the resilience of small producers to safeguard food security in a time of multiple crises and risks. Our key concern is that future food security is imperilled by climate change. States must ensure that food security and climate change policies are harmonised and the outcomes of the negotiations in both fora shall be mutually supportive. We call upon the leadership of each process to meet together as early as possible in 2010 to ensure this objective.

A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR FOOD SECURITY

The current input-intensive agricultural system is struggling under the combined pressures of climate change and food insecurity, exacerbated by large-scale agro-fuel production and increased speculation on land. This type of agriculture depends heavily on fossil fuels that generate excessive greenhouse gas emissions. It also leads to the expulsion of rural populations and to inefficient and wasteful food chains. This system does not provide equitable access to food. Policy makers have other choices.

Alternative modes of production, based on diversity in all its forms and small-scale producers, have already proven successful. Diversity is also essential to cope with climate change. Small producers can safeguard the seeds, crop, livestock and other agrobiodiversity threatened by climate change; they can reduce agriculture's environmental footprint and engage with consumers in innovative food systems to guarantee diverse and balanced diets. Increased investment in agriculture should strengthen small-scale food producers and give more attention to local and national food systems.

Climate change will lead to highly unstable production conditions that will require farmer-led research and breeding strategies in changing ecosystems. In particular, the development of the numerous underutilised (so-called "orphan") crops could, for a very small investment, yield reliable and nutritious food. The innovative potential of small producers must be recognized and supported. Their strategies, combined with adequate incentives and supportive public policies, could build increasingly resilient agro-ecological systems. Placing small food producers at the centre of the strategy will create jobs and strengthen rural communities. This is vital in a time of economic crisis and will enable rural societies to determine their own development paths. When we speak of small-scale food producers, we are including farmers, fishers, pastoralists, forest keepers, indigenous people and urban producers, and we are especially mindful that women play a major role in all of these categories.

For that strategy to materialize, governments must ensure that intellectual property rights requirements and restrictions are not barriers to innovation and diffusion. In parallel, governments must prevent the negative impact of highly concentrated food chains. This strategy will require substantially enhanced international cooperation, including the review of relevant treaties and agreements.

We are not talking about a return to some bucolic past but of building upon local knowledge and science for the 21st century that is productive, effective and sustainable in feeding the hungry now and in the decades ahead. Our goal is to achieve the full realization of the right to food for all.