

“Food for All - A national and global perspective on how to create sustainable food systems for nutrition in the framework of the SDGs and Human Right to Food”

Impulse Lecture

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Symposium “Sustainable Food Systems – going beyond Food Security”

Justus-Liebig University Gießen

07.02.2020

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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Prof. Breuer,
dear Dr. Jordan,

thank you very much for your invitation to the International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems here in Giessen. My name is Hanns-Christoph Eiden. I am president of the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE), which has a variety of tasks in the areas of agriculture, food, nutrition, rural development, forestry, fisheries and consumer protection.

We work within the scope of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

Sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition is of core interest for my agency.

On behalf of the Ministry, we act as a funding agency for projects, in particular research projects, in the areas of food and agriculture. Our projects address topics such as the promotion of innovations, organic farming, protein crops, biological diversity, animal welfare and husbandry, global food security and nutrition.

We are also active in the field of information and knowledge transfer. Hence, we engage to disseminate the results of research projects to various stakeholder groups.

The Federal Centre for Nutrition (BZfE) has been established within the Federal Office in order to better inform the public about needs around the issue of food and nutrition.

Today I am here on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, to share with you a national and global perspective on how to create sustainable food systems for nutrition in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Right to Food.

The challenges for our agricultural and food systems are large and complex.

Today, some 7.7 billion people are living on this planet. This number is increasing each year by another 80 Mio. people, the current population of Germany.

By 2050, it is estimated that there may be 9-10 billion people who will need to be provided with sufficient, safe and diverse food for a sustainable healthy diet.

In addition, climate change, the continuing loss of biological diversity and the scarcity of other natural resources play a serious role.

These factors directly affect our agricultural systems and must be taken into account when we want to shape sustainable food systems for the future.

There is a strong need for an integrated approach, a systems approach, that links agricultural policy and production with nutrition policy and consumers. The purpose of agricultural production is to nourish people. But we also have to take care of our planet and nourish the planet. This is a task along the whole chain from agricultural production until consumption.

That is why the title of my presentation is: Sustainable Food Systems for Nutrition.

Such an integrated food system approach for nutrition has to consider the five dimensions environment, economy, society, health and culture.

Therefore, sustainable healthy diets should

- promote all dimensions of individuals' health and well-being,
- have low environmental pressure and impact,
- be accessible, affordable, safe and equitable,
- and culturally acceptable.

Key objective of national policy in Germany is to make the healthy and sustainable behaviour the easiest and most attractive behaviour.

For the implementation of this approach, we are using a mix of different instruments that include coherent political measures in agriculture and nutrition. We are also encouraging a change in consumer behaviour as well as the design and modification of food environments.

Improved consumer information, that supports consumers in achieving a sustainable healthy diet and supporting a supply, that enables sustainable healthy choices are key objectives of this approach.

Therefore, focusing more on quality and looking on the issue with a system perspective is the way forward to tackle possible trade-offs.

To give you two examples:

1) Schools in this regard are one of the most important settings for improving nutrition sustainably.

That's why we focus very much on the quality of school meals and supporting and coordinating the German Länder in their efforts to implement the scientific recommendations, look for feasible and pragmatic approaches, help to organize the public purchasing of quality food or specific qualities such as organic food.

And in this context try to help to establish regional value chains, linking the neighbouring regions farmers with this growing market.

That means, we are not only talking about the final meal but also about incentives for production, storage and investments, safe delivery contracts, safe in both ways.

On a global level, we intend to establish a "World Coalition on the Provision of Healthy School Meals" (*working title*) within the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition.

The World Coalition wants to improve the quality of provided school meals worldwide and to facilitate a knowledge exchange and a systems approach at the political level.

2) A second example: Moreover, when dealing with the sustainability of the food system we also have to address the issue of food losses and food waste. The National German Strategy on the Reduction of Food Waste envisages a dialogue process with all the relevant actors in the food system to reduce food waste along the whole value chain.

All relevant sectors, producers, procurers, retailers, processors, canteens, final consumers must assess their share in waste and losses. And develop reduction strategies which fit for them.

From these examples, you can see that sustainable food systems and healthy diets are not only high on the political agenda in Germany, but that we are indeed dealing with the issue from the perspective how to create sustainable food supplies.

Our guiding principle is the Human Rights Approach and especially the Right to Food.

And: Germany is not only acting nationally.

Besides the BMEL, also the Federal Ministry for Technical Cooperation and Development (BMZ) plays a strong role with its initiative “One World, No Hunger”, pooling a considerable amount of German funds for economic cooperation and development in the field of sustainable food systems and nutrition.

However, at a global level, regrettably, we have to state an increase in the number of people suffering hunger to approximately 820 million. But also the fact that more than 2 billion people are suffering from different kinds of malnutrition (Micronutrient deficiency, overweight and obesity) is alarming.

There is a clear need for action.

We know: Food security depends on a sustainable, resource-conserving and productive agricultural sector that can stand up to the challenges of climate change.

This is always the starting point. Agriculture will therefore remain a core field of action. But our perspective must be expanded.

For this reason, Germany strongly supports the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which is currently developing voluntary guidelines on food systems and nutrition to be adopted at the 47th CFS meeting in October this year.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide an effective set of guiding principles for states, private investors, non-governmental organisations and small farmers to be able to take appropriate measures to ensure adequate nutrition for all.

With the initiatives provided by the CFS, we can help to create political convergence and develop strategies.

This Committee is unique and efficient. It has cross-sectoral networks and brings together policy makers, science, the private sector and civil society.

Germany is committed to building on FAO expertise and using strategic points of contact to structure the topic from diversification of agricultural production to processing up to issues such as food education and women's empowerment.

In respect to the ongoing work on global level, I would also like to highlight the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) of FAO and WHO in 2014, which has given a significant impulse to address the issue of nutrition and where an action plan on how to achieve better nutrition was adopted by the member states of both organisations.

The implementation of this action plan was set out in the UN Decade of Food Security 2016-2025 and we are contributing to its success with our engagement in the world coalition on healthy school meals.

But let's also look ahead:

In autumn this year, the "Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit" and in 2021 the planned "UN World Food Systems Summit" in New York provide strong opportunities to make significant further steps forward.

We welcome the decision to organize the UN World Food Systems Summit in 2021 in New York. Its aim is to develop an action plan in the field of food system transformation that goes beyond the "usual" coordination of political commitments.

Both the global South and the global North are to be taken into account in order to facilitate a worldwide transformation of food systems.

In the preparation of the Summit, synergies are to be achieved by taking into account other processes and reports – for example the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Climate Summit, the Nutrition for Growth Summit or the Biodiversity Summit.

The Rome-Based Agencies (FAO, WFP and IFAD) will be involved in the planning of the Summit right from the beginning. But it will not be a Rome-centered approach.

All in all Germany has been a major contributor to international processes in the field of nutrition for a long time, and it will continue to do so. Not only on the political and international global level, but also in concrete terms.

That's why for example Germany has funded various projects in this field through the Bilateral Trust Fund of the BMEL with the FAO. In the last 5 years, around 35 mio. € have been invested in projects supporting the implementation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security and nutrition.

Listening to my comments on these projects you may again sense that the food systems approach is already inherent in our work.

One of these BTF projects assists in reducing climate risks and vulnerabilities in city region food systems (CRFS) by promoting integrated climate-resilience strategies, policies, action plans and by reinforcing production systems in three city regions in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Special attention is given to improve and scale up small-scale agricultural practices that are resilient to climate and natural disaster risks in such city region food systems.

The beneficiaries of the project are national and local government institutions, research and development institutions, public and private sector extension services, NGOs, farmer unions and associations of agricultural producers or workers.

Another example: In the interest of increasing and better targeting the cooperation between German agricultural and nutritional research institutions and partners worldwide, the Federal Ministry has launched a funding system for International Research Cooperation on global food security and nutrition in 2013.

The BLE is in charge of executing and administrating the projects. This scheme supports applied and solution-oriented research in the field of nutrition and food security, carried out jointly by German research institutions and research institutions in partner countries.

BMEL has so far launched three successive research calls, with partners in African, South and South-East Asian Countries.

The first two calls focused on diversification of agricultural production as well as on food processing and packaging related issues.

The results of the first research projects are already available, e.g. the Project “Scaling up Nutrition” (ScaleN) in Tanzania worked on the research question on how the development of diversified and sustainable agriculture and nutrition education can contribute to food and nutrition security for the local population in rural Tanzania (Morogoro and Dodoma region).

The results are encouraging. Several nutrition sensitive innovations were successfully identified and implemented, such as kitchen, school and community gardens, composting and soil enrichment education / trainings, a mobile phone integrated market access system and a nutrition up-scaling centre.

The most recent third call, which was last year, addresses the nutrition environment in the above-mentioned target regions, thereby focussing on consumers and market related issues.

By deliberately designing these calls along the whole food value chain, the research projects funded by BMEL are contributing substantially to a growing understanding and knowledge exchange on the complexity of food systems in developing and emerging economies.

To conclude: Exchanging views about ways for more sustainability of food systems is highly important.

I therefore welcome today's event as a platform for an open exchange of information on these issues. I am pleased about the lively interest on this important topic. I am happy that with you we have many experts here, who are concerned with the issues addressed.

Our common overall aim is to make the necessary contribution to the sustainability goals of the United Nations (Agenda 2030), in particular to achieving sustainability goal -it is about ending hunger and much more!

With this in mind, I wish us lively discussions on ways to achieve "Food for All"!

Thank you very much!