FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER IS A PRECONDITION FOR DEVELOPMENT
Agriculture and Food Security Must Be Firmly Enshrined in the Agenda of Germany’s EU Council Presidency

On 01 July 2020, Germany assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union. From a political perspective, it is in Europe’s own best interests to promote prosperity in Africa, so it would be short-sighted to put the overwhelming focus of its agenda on Europe alone. Although rural development has not been overlooked within the EU, it does not play a central role in its development policy. Support for sustainable agriculture and food security must be a high priority in the EU budget for 2021–2027 and at the EU–AU summit.

The German federal government and the European Commission are clearly prioritising national and intra-European interests. In light of the current crises arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and from tensions within Europe, this approach is understandable but nonetheless short-sighted: These crises will be solved either globally or not at all. International solidarity is now more important than ever.

According to the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 208), the primary objective of EU development policy is the fight against poverty. The 2017 European Consensus on Development, which builds on the Agenda 2030, reinforces this point while also addressing “sustainable agriculture and food systems”. In a joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council entitled Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa, the European Commission states that “The EU and Africa must join efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger and address the challenges of food and nutrition security by boosting safe and sustainable agri-food systems.”

These objectives, which the EU set for itself, are currently being overlayed by other issues.

---

1European Commission, Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa. 09.02.2020
Germany’s agenda for its EU Council presidency pays scant attention to development policy and none at all to the policy area of agriculture or food security. This is a strategic mistake: In many African countries, more than half of the labour force — and often more than 70 percent — is working in agriculture. Defeating hunger and creating opportunities for young people require, firstly, increasing self-sufficiency in terms of food and secondly, ensuring a productive food and agriculture sector that is less dependent on importing and exporting goods and is therefore less susceptible to foreign-exchange pressures. A third requirement is a well-functioning and transparent system governing land tenure, which protects the land rights of rural communities.

Every year, millions of young people enter the job market. They want and demand to participate actively in creating innovation and prosperity instead of having to suffer from hunger and dependency. Lacking opportunities in rural areas, they migrate to the cities, where working conditions are precarious at best. Ultimately, many of them try to migrate to wealthier countries. Young people who cannot emigrate are vulnerable to recruitment by radical and terrorist groups, which have destabilised not only the Sahel region but are now increasingly expanding into other parts of Africa.

The key message Welthungerhilfe takes away from this is:
The fight against hunger is a prerequisite for development. If prosperity, job creation, and peace are to play a truly strategic role in Africa, food security and support for rural areas must be the focus of the EU–AU summit and of Germany’s EU Council presidency as a whole. Germany’s presidency should also set an example and advocate greater civil society participation at the planned EU–AU summit in Brussels in October 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating negative trends in several regions and increasing food and nutrition insecurity. Due to the unexpected loss of income and disruption of agricultural production and investment caused by the pandemic, an increase in poverty must be expected on the African continent. Only a productive, sustainable and inclusive agriculture can succeed in offering attractive income opportunities and perspectives for the future to many of the millions of young people in Africa within a short period of time.

Governments, farmers’ associations, and other civil society organisations that represent social groups, such as women and young people, need and deserve support in their efforts to achieve an inclusive agricultural sector. One that produces nutritious food for its own population, provides good quality employment, and makes an effective contribution to climate resilience. Promoting agriculture in Africa also actively promotes peace, and sustainable practices help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

A massive increase in unemployment combined with a lack of prospects, especially for younger people, would have predictably disastrous consequences for peace, prosperity, and democracy on our neighbouring continent. This comes at a time when — as Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasised in her statement on Germany’s EU Council presidency to the German parliament — anti-democratic, authoritarian, and antagonistic postures are increasingly being adopted around the world².

Welthungerhilfe’s Policy Recommendations to the German Government

While it holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union, the German government must work for poverty reduction, food security, agriculture, and land rights to be more clearly enshrined in its foreign and development policies. In particular:

Regarding EU Financing for Development

The EU’s new budget, the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), establishes its new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as the most important vehicle for development policy going forward. Germany should exercise the negotiating influence it wields through holding the presidency of the Council to ensure that the fight against hunger and poverty, specifically in countries where the situation is serious according to the Global Hunger Index Severity Scale, is prioritised in the NDICI’s programming process. Civil society organisations in these countries must also be involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of such programmes.

A critical review must be conducted into the role of blending instruments, which use public funds to mobilise private capital and are undertaken

through bilateral and multilateral financial institutions. A report issued at the request of the European Parliament’s Committee on Development (DEVE) comes to the following conclusions: Funds have mostly been mobilised for relatively well-developed countries, with the least-developed countries (LDCs) receiving a very small share. Funds are also tied to expected returns, so very little capital flows to social sectors. From this it follows that additional grants are needed for LDCs. Support for state institutions is also required to safeguard essential services in the sectors of food and nutrition security, health, education, and social security. These are key requirements for fighting against poverty. The practice of imposing conditionality on EU development aid (e.g. with regard to migration management) must be challenged, because it is not consistent with the principles of aid effectiveness or with the goal of establishing a true partnership with Africa.

Regarding the EU Recovery Package “Next Generation EU” (NGE)

Next Generation EU (NGE) aims to repair damage caused by the coronavirus crisis and to create opportunities for the next generation with a EUR 750 billion budget. It was decided at the EU summit that none of the funds will be allocated outside the EU: Earlier drafts had envisioned an additional EUR five billion for humanitarian aid as well as EUR 10.5 billion through NDICI for non-European partner countries in recognition of the devastating consequences suffered, particularly in the Global South. Both have been cut. This is devastating and does not correspond to the dramatic situation at hand. In addition, partner countries are left unclear about support for the development of their agri-food sectors in the medium and long term, especially in light of the current economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the Interinstitutional Agreement we ask the German EU Council presidency to seek ringfencing for the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve for humanitarian crises outside the EU.

The Farm to Fork strategy, recently presented by the EU Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, aims to initiate a transformation to fairer and more sustainable patterns of production and consumption within the EU. However, it remains vague on the question of how to reduce the negative effects that our own production and consumption decisions have on food-insecure countries in the Global South. The strategy also fails to address development policy in any significant depth. At the same time, the two main EU development strategies that are still in operation — to promote food security and to fight malnutrition through humanitarian assistance — are no longer expected to be reviewed and updated as was previously planned. A firm strategy and implementation plan are needed to ensure that the fight against hunger and malnutrition retains its position as a priority for EU development cooperation.

Human rights will only be granted “due consideration” under the Farm to Fork strategy. To make agriculture and rural development truly inclusive, all relevant strategies must be in alignment with and implement human rights instruments, including the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other

People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

**In Favour of European Due Diligence Legislation**

In recent years, debates about creating mandatory due diligence requirements to regulate human rights throughout the supply chains of companies that invest outside the EU, have started to bear fruit. These initiatives are gaining support within the German federal government and from responsible businesses and investors. The German government should harness the momentum gained through beginning its EU Council presidency to overcome any remaining reservations from German ministries and parties and to promote relevant legislative initiatives with enthusiasm. This includes new legislation in Germany, EU rules on global supply chains and due diligence proposed by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and the UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights.

It is Welthungerhilfe’s view that the human right to food must be protected by laws and regulations. Small-scale farmers and farm workers are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Agricultural products are only sustainable if the food security of producers is ensured, in addition to adhering to other social and environmental principles during cultivation. Monitoring mechanisms should therefore make the Food Security Standard (FSS) mandatory, because it ensures the food security of farmers and farm workers while protecting nearby communities from the negative effects of agricultural export production.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres never tires of emphasising that the pandemic will only be beaten through collective action — or not at all. It would be disastrous for all of us if these international efforts fail. However, the coronavirus crisis also provides an opportunity to initiate a shift towards greater solidarity and collaboration, thereby making it possible for everyone to live a life in dignity, free from hunger and poverty.