

Delegation from

Republic of South Africa

Represented by

Northwest High School

Position Paper for the Food and Agriculture Organization

The issues before the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are: Beyond 2015: Addressing Global Food Security; and Promoting Nutrition Education in Primary and Secondary Schools. The Republic of South Africa strongly affirms this Committee's goals, believing that the right to food is a universal human right and that hunger and food insecurity can be ended in a generation. The South African Delegation is prepared to present some practical solutions to address the two issues.

I. Beyond 2015: Addressing Global Food Insecurity

The South African Delegation believes that today's world leaders must show far greater recognition of the continuous lack of nutritious food, particularly for women and children living in poverty, and understand the devastating and long-term repercussions it brings to all levels of society. According to the FAO, world hunger levels are decreasing, though nearly 805 million people remain malnourished. FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, proclaimed that "...nutrition is a public issue... that must be addressed by governments, civil society, the private sector and academia" (Expo 2015). The Republic of South Africa (SA) calls on the international community to cooperate proactively to ensure future global food security for all people.

South Africa's commitment to food equality is codified in its constitution: "...every citizen has a right to have access to sufficient food, water and social security." To keep this commitment, SA created the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries and the Department of Social Development in 1993. Dr. Sheldon Moulton, Acting Chief Director for Economic and Social Affairs, called for "...the international community ...[to] strengthen and revitalize agricultural and rural development in a sustainable manner" (Institute for Global Dialogue, *Food Security and Nutrition: Scaling Up the Global Response*, February 2013). As an endorsing member to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), SA has demonstrated its commitment to actions geared towards food security by achieving substantial progress towards integrating biological diversity and other conservation strategies into relevant plans, programs, and policies.

It is impossible to address all of the complicated and intertwined factors resulting in food scarcity in regions throughout the world, though the current evidence of climate change is an immediate and critical consideration because of its impact on food production. One of the most effective ground-level solutions to countering the effects of climate change and creating food crops that are more resilient to weather variation is agricultural biodiversity. Without the support of a robust biodiversity, resources used for agriculture, such as land, will continue to decrease globally at an alarming rate. Agricultural biodiversity is "all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture" (CBD). According to the Conference of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol, taking advantage of these "components of biological diversity" is pivotal to ensuring the health of the planet, upon which human health is dependent (Decision VIII/23). SA urges fellow Member States to implement agricultural biodiversity into existing food security programs, sustainable farming practices, and carefully selected and independently verified biotechnology. Reliable food security depends on long-term and economically viable sustainability. The international community must recognize the importance of sustainability: the ability to provide resources without "...depleting or diminishing the capacity of the Earth's systems to support life, or at the expense of others well-being" (FAO Sustainability Pathways). SA calls on all world leaders to promote sustainable agriculture practices for all, including small-scale, farmers. Member States should support credible and proven non-governmental organizations who work to promote food security, and who train and educate citizens, volunteers, and others about the importance of implementing sustainable agriculture. Finally, the SA Delegation urges the UN to work with, and continue funding, research facilities such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, so that safe and effective products can be developed through biotechnology. Biotechnology plays a significant role supporting the planet's biodiversity and more than 13.3 million farmers already use some type of biotechnology to "increase yields... and reduce farming's impact on the environment". Acknowledging the benefits of

biotechnology, the Republic of South Africa ends by calling on non-profit organizations, academic institution, private and public corporation, and national governments worldwide to aid small-scale farmers to continue implementing such technology into their agricultural practices. Small-scale farming sustainably feeds the global population without harming the economy or biodiversity (2012 Rio+20 Conference) and leads to higher yields of food production, therefore leading to “increased household food security and higher household income” (FAO Sustainability Pathways). Today more than ever, small-scale farmers are required to help improve global food security.

II. Promoting Nutrition Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

Nearly 26% of all children, “go to bed hungry or suffer malnourishment” (FAO, March 2014), and the international community must recognize that immediate action is required if Member States want a viable future with stable economies and communities that engage in social and technological growth. Practical knowledge of nutrition is an essential component to solving the problems of hunger and malnourishment and the promotion of nutrition education in primary and secondary schools is essential.

The SA Delegation understands that in order for children to ultimately become contributing adult citizens, their bodies and minds must be properly nourished. Knowing how essential good nutrition is to building a stable nation, Nelson Mandela implemented the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in 1994. Since then, millions of students have benefitted from this program—receiving hot meals and education on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. As a collective body, the UN “Encourages efforts at all levels to establish and strengthen social protection measures and programmes, including national safety nets and protection programmes for the needy and vulnerable, such as...school feeding programmes...” (*A/RES/68/233*). SA supports and looks to this resolution as a guideline for future action regarding the issue of nutrition education and encourages other Member States to do the same. Declaring 2014 as the “Year of Agriculture in Africa”, SA strongly urges the international community to support and act on any local, regional, or global initiatives that promote agricultural development, particularly suggesting the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as a model.

Recognizing that 162 million people still live with chronic malnutrition (Millennium Development Goals Report 2014), the South Africa affirms that strengthening the bond of communities on an international scale is a key element in decreasing malnutrition. SA believes national governments should recognize and offer practical supports to local vegetable gardens as a proven part of strengthening community bonds and nutrition education. SA also encourages the international community to consider its strong nutrition education program as a possible model for adaptation by other Member States. National governments are advised to provide resources, such as gardening tools and hands-on training, to primary and secondary schools to ensure school gardens remain successful. School gardens can not only provide food security for many, but also increase connections in communities, empower women, and carry the potential to lift people out of poverty. In addition, the FAO has noted that school gardens can effectively “improve the quality of nutrition and education of children and their families in rural and urban areas in developing countries...integrated with...nutrition and education programmes”. Implementing vegetable gardens in nutrition education programs in primary and secondary schools allow not only women, but children, to play a bigger role in promoting food security. Providing hands-on experiences may inspire kids, especially those in developing nations, to work with agriculture in the future. Yet, nothing can occur without the support of farmers, parents, and teachers. SA calls upon these adults to play a proactive role in improving nutrition education by supporting the school and children. Similarly to the NSNP of South Africa, 150 school garden micro projects have been supported by the FAO and established worldwide. The international community can look to SA as a leader in promoting “long-term national school garden programmes” (School Gardens: Education and Nutrition Go Together, Says FAO). Despite the high chance of success of national school garden programmes, SA encourages the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF to help nations overcome any current or future obstacles. By supporting strong national school garden programmes, SA believes global nutrition education in primary and secondary schools will significantly improve.