



Food security in the Sustainable Development Goals: Where is the process heading?

Next year is the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Despite great progress in some areas, major challenges remain.¹ At the Rio+20 conference, world leaders agreed to draft a new set of goals for post-2015 development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² This brief examines how the SDGs process to date has addressed issues related to food security, sustainable agriculture and nutrition, and identifies areas where SIANI's contributions would be most valuable.

The SDGs have a broader scope than the MDGs and take a different approach.³ While the MDGs applied only to poor countries, the SDGs aim to be *universally applicable*; the goals will be relevant to all countries, and all will be expected to contribute to the goals' achievement. While the MDGs addressed key issues individually, the SDGs are meant to take a more *integrated* approach to social, economic and environmental issues, to ensure sustainability. The SDGs are also meant to set "*transformative*" targets that address the root causes of poverty and systemic barriers to sustainable development.

An emerging agenda for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture

The MDGs addressed food security in Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and covered other issues relevant to agriculture and rural development in Goals 7 and 8, on environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development. However, it did not specifically address agriculture.

The SDGs are being drafted through a process led by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), which has been tasked with developing a proposal for the UN Secretary General. In parallel, stakeholder consultations at the global and national levels, and numerous workshops, statements, and reports by UN and non-governmental organizations, think tanks and academics are also helping shape the agenda. The OWG's third meeting, in May 2013, included in-depth discussions on food security and nutrition and on sustainable agriculture, and several more SDG inputs since have focused on those issues.⁴

General consensus has emerged on the objectives of an SDG for sustainable agriculture and food security: increasing productivity while ensuring efficient use of resources. There is also broad support for an equity agenda that prioritizes vulnerable populations and vulnerable food and farming systems. While the MDGs' hunger eradication goal focused on caloric intake, the SDGs process has emphasized the nutritional value of food as well. Inputs address undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, obesity and overweight and emphasize the importance of good nutrition in the first 1000 days of a child's life. The Secretary General's "Zero Hunger Challenge" has been a source of inspiration.⁵ Other widely cited principles include "the right to food", "right to be free from hunger", "right to adequate food", and a "land degradation-neutral world".

Consistent with the SDGs' more integrated approach, key inputs to the process have highlighted *linkages* between food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, and with a wide range of issues covered in other proposed goals: inclusive economic growth, job creation, population dynamics, employment, social protection,

energy, water, health, sanitation, natural resources management, ecosystems protection and resilience. The *sustainability* of food systems features prominently in several SDG inputs, as does the need to integrate the sustainable use of resources (water, land, forests) in efforts to intensify agriculture. Another recurring theme is the need to improve agricultural value chains and reduce food waste at all stages – including post-harvest and storage losses as well as at the consumption end.

Consistent with the aim to formulate universal and transformative goals, several contributions to the SDGs debate have focused on the *underlying causes* of food insecurity, highlighting gender inequality, social exclusion, and unequal access to opportunities. Much attention is being given to smallholders and small-scale farming systems, which are seen as both vulnerable, and as key agents of change. The need to build smallholders' resilience has been emphasized, as well as the need for their involvement in decision-making, control over inputs (including land), access to markets, and capacity-building. Discussions have also focused on international policies that affect food prices, trade, food safety and investment in the agricultural sector, with calls for making these more supportive of the least developed countries and their products. Private-sector engagement, for example in agribusiness, has also been highlighted, along with businesses' social and environmental responsibilities. More generally, government ownership and accountability for the development agenda has been cited as crucial to progress, and multi-stakeholder forums have been identified as a preferred form of engagement and coordination.

SDG proposals on food security and sustainable agriculture

With a few weeks remaining to finalize its report, the Open Working Group is considering several goals and targets relevant to sustainable food security and sustainable agriculture. The Zero draft (June 2) includes eight targets under Goal 2 "End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture." There are some overlaps in the proposed targets and suggestions were made at the 12th session of the OWG (June 16-20) to merge or move some of them.⁶ Within the framework, other goals that address food insecurity focus on gender equality, health, reducing inequality, promoting sustainable consumption and production, addressing climate change, protecting terrestrial ecosystems and halting biodiversity loss, and strengthening global partnership for sustainable development.⁷

The issues prioritized by the Open Working Group also feature prominently in other SDG frameworks, sector goals and targets proposed by various entities. In general, the proposals reflect a desire to complete the MDGs' unfinished business but also go further. Increased agricultural productivity is closely linked with sustainable and efficient resource use and efforts to reduce land degradation and protect biodiversity. Social policies and resource access and affordability are also improved, ensuring that agriculture provides decent work and safe incomes. Smallholders, women and other vulnerable groups are empowered, and investments in agriculture are targeted at smallholders in particular. Global trade is also made more development-friendly. The tables below summarize the various proposed targets related to food security across different goals.

¹ United Nations (2013a) ² United Nations (2012) ³ For more information on criteria and principles guiding the selection of goals and targets, see e.g. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform "Sustainable Development Goals"; IRF2015 "The OWG11 'Focus Areas' Paper: An IRF2015 Review"; and "Goals, Targets and Indicators"; Stockholm Environment Institute "Cross-Sectoral Integration in the Sustainable Development Goals: a Nexus Approach". ⁴ See end of document for list of documents reviewed for this brief. ⁵ The UN Secretary's "Zero Hunger Challenge" goals are: i) zero stunted children under 2; ii) 100% access to adequate food all year around iii) all food systems are sustainable; iv) a 100% increase in smallholder productivity and income; v) zero loss or waste of food. ⁶ For more detail, see e.g. [Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#) ⁷ For a review of goals addressing food security see table on p.2, or OWG (2014) "Introduction and Proposed Goals and Targets on Sustainable Development for the Post 2015 Development Agenda", 2 June 2014.

Targets for food security and sustainable agriculture in proposed SDGs

Entity	High-level Panel on the post-2015 Development Agenda
Proposed goals linked to food security	<i>Food Security and Nutrition / End Poverty / Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality / Manage natural resource assets sustainably / Secure sustainable energy / Create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance</i>
Food access and nutrition	End hunger and protect everyone's right to sufficient, safe, affordable, and nutritious food Reduce stunting, wasting and anaemia in children under 5
Agriculture	Adopt sustainable agricultural practices Increase agricultural productivity, with a focus on sustainably increasing smallholder yields and access to irrigation Reduce post-harvest loss and food waste
Forests and biodiversity	Reduce deforestation and increase reforestation Safeguard ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
Land management	Increase the share of women and men, communities, and businesses with secure rights to land, property, and other assets
Equity and gender	Ensure women's equal rights to own and inherit property, sign contracts, register businesses and open bank accounts
Policy	Support an open, fair and development-friendly trade system; reduce trade-distorting measures (including agricultural subsidies); improve market access for developing country products

Entity	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
Proposed goals linked to food security	<i>End extreme poverty including hunger / Improve agricultural systems and raise rural prosperity / Achieve health and well-being at all ages / Gender equality, social inclusion and human rights / Curb human induced climate change and ensure sustainable energy / Secure biodiversity and ensure good management of water, oceans, forests and natural resources</i>
Food access and nutrition	End hunger and achieve food security Achieve appropriate nutrition and end child stunting
Agriculture	Ensure sustainable, high-yield food production systems with efficient use of water, soil nutrients, and energy, supporting nutritious diets with low food losses and waste
Forests and biodiversity	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improved practices in agriculture and forestry, among others Commit governments and businesses to sustainable, integrated and transparent management of agricultural land and forests Halt forest and wetland conversion to agriculture, protect soil resources, and ensure resilience of farming systems
Land management	Ensure universal access in rural areas to basic resources and infrastructure services (including land, agricultural inputs, markets and advisory services)
Equity and gender	End discrimination in public service delivery, rule of law, access to justice and participation in political and economic life
Policy	Promote and monitor healthy diets

Entity	Rome-based UN agencies (WFP, FAO and IFAD)
Proposed goals linked to food security	<i>Access to food / (Mal)Nutrition / Sustainable food systems / Smallholder productivity and income / Food loss and waste</i>
Food access and nutrition	All people have access to safe, affordable, diverse and nutritious food all year round End malnutrition in all forms: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and diet-related diseases, with special attention to ending stunting Address the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women Reduce by 50 % human and economic losses from food chain crises
Agriculture	Make food systems more productive, sustainable, resilient and efficient Use all natural resources sustainably for food and agricultural production Increase the productivity, incomes and resilience of smallholder family farms More efficient post-production food systems that reduce the global rate of food loss and waste by 50% Increase resilience of production systems to climate-change-driven extreme events. Maintain sustainability of production systems in the face of long-term climate changes Reduce the intensity of fossil fuel use in food systems
Forests and biodiversity	Use and manage natural resources sustainably, including land, water, air and genetic resources Ensure all forests and mountain ecosystems are sustainably managed, with forests on at least 30% of land area Increase forest carbon stocks Biodiversity is conserved and used sustainably to contribute to food security
Land management	Ensure equality of economic opportunity for all women and men, including secure right to land tenure 30% increase in cropland, grazing land and forests under sustainable management, ensuring restoration of degraded soils and biodiversity conservation and increasing provision of productive, ecological and socio-cultural services
Equity and gender	All small food producers, especially women, have secure access to adequate inputs, knowledge, productive resources and services to increase their productivity sustainably and improve their income and resilience Ensure equal economic opportunity for all women and men, including secure land tenure rights

Entity	Open Working Group on the SDGs
Proposed goals linked to food security	<i>End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture End poverty in all its forms everywhere / Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere / Reduce inequality within and among countries / Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns</i>
Food access and nutrition	End hunger, ensure all people have access to adequate, safe, affordable, and nutritious food all year round Improve effectiveness of humanitarian food emergency responses
Agriculture	More productive, sustainable, resilient and efficient food systems with minimal adverse human and environmental impacts Reduce global food waste by 50% at retail and consumer level, particularly through developed countries' action Reduce food losses by 50% during production, post-harvest and along food supply chains Increase resilience of agriculture, in particular for small-scale farmers Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
Forests and biodiversity	Sustainably manage forests Reverse loss and enhance forest cover worldwide and increase reforestation, including via incentives for developing countries Protect agricultural biodiversity, including through enhanced use of local and traditional knowledge, and through agricultural research and development Halt biodiversity loss; protect threatened species Conserve and sustainably use ecosystems, with particular attention to wetlands; restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystems Maintain genetic diversity of cultivated and wild plants and animals
Land management	Ensure development opportunities for all men and women, including secure rights to own land Halt and prevent land degradation and reclaim land; improve land productivity and soil quality
Equity and gender	Increase incomes and productivity of small-scale food producers, with a particular focus on women Achieve access to adequate inputs, knowledge and productive resources, financial services and markets, especially for small and family farmers, pastoralists, and fishers, with a particular focus on women Ensure women's equal access to, control and ownership of assets and natural and other productive resources, as well as non-discriminatory access to essential services and infrastructure, including financial services and ICT
Policy	Integrate sustainable resource use and biodiversity in national and local development strategies, planning processes Implement measures to curb food price volatility and ensure proper functioning of markets Integrate natural resources and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes Reduce distortions in international trade, including phasing out agricultural export subsidies Improve food commodity markets Increase investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research, technology development, institutions and capacity-building in developing countries, particularly net food importers Improve market access for agricultural exports by developing countries

Sources: FAO (2014), Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2014b); FAO, WFP, IFAD (2014); High Level Panel on Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013); Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2014)

Note: Proposals have been paraphrased; see the sources for the original text.

What's missing?

The many aspects of food security – interlinked through production and consumption chains, natural resource use, and interactions between countries – call for a holistic and integrated approach. The SDGs process so far has taken a more integrated approach than the MDGs did, but not enough. While the connections between goals are generally recognized, it is less clear how the SDG framework can address them to minimize contradictions and enhance synergies in the pursuit of different goals. The strong linkages between food security to other goal areas need to be addressed for the SDG framework to be sustainable.

Further, although there is largely consensus about the food security goals, the strategies to achieve them have yet to be developed. Individual inputs have made suggestions for climate-smart agriculture, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, biotechnology and agro-ecology, but the proposals mostly speak in broad terms about technical, policy and investment conditions for achieving sustainable agriculture. The proposals are also weak on issues such as research and technology transfer, although investments in access to affordable and environmentally sound technologies will be crucial to enabling the desired systemic shifts in current agriculture and food systems. As several inputs have stressed, farmers need stronger scientific support along with their traditional knowledge. SIANI's mission to promote dialogue on food security and nutrition is deeply relevant here.

Where next?

The Open Working Group is delivering its final report to the Secretary General prior to the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly, in September 2014. The OWG report will serve as the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations that will be launched in September. It will also feed into the Secretary General's Synthesis Report, which is expected towards the end of 2014 and will summarize the SDG process and inputs to date. The negotiations are to continue until a summit in September 2015, where a final SDGs decision is expected.

There is general agreement among governments that the SDGs should include a goal on food security and agriculture, but agreeing on some aspects of the goal may still prove challenging. While targets focusing on food access enjoy broad support, sustainability and equity-oriented targets are politically more difficult. Production of biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), trade-distorting subsidies and "land-grabbing" are also contested areas.

Beyond goals and targets, negotiations must still address indicators, the means of implementation, monitoring and, not least, financing. Thus, the OWG's proposal is by no means the final product. There is clear scope for SIANI's experience in brokering knowledge between sectors, stimulating research ideas, sharing on-the-ground experience and linking it to policy and global processes, to support the continued development of Sustainable Development Goals as countries move to formulate national targets and strategies for implementation.

The following documents have been reviewed for this brief:

FAO (2014) *"Targets and Indicators for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals"*. Available at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/post-2015/FAO_TI_14_themes_EN.pdf

FAO, WFP, IFAD (2014) *"Rome Based Agencies proposal of priority target and indicators for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture"*. Available at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/post-2015/Targets_and_indicators_RBA_joint_proposal.pdf

High Level Panel on Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013) *"A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development"*. Available at: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/>

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2013a) *"Concluding Remarks of Co-Chairs, OWG3 24 May 2013"*. Available at: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1824Co-Chairs_Concluding%20Remarks_OWG3.pdf

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2013b) *"Third Meeting of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals Co-Chair's Summary"*. Available at: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1859OWG3%20Draft%20Summary%20rev2DOC_1306%20clean.pdf

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2013c) *"Progress report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3238summaryallowg.pdf>

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2014a) *"Working Document for 5-9 May Session of Open Working Group"* Available at: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3686WorkingDoc_0205_additional supporters.pdf

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (2014b) *"Zero Draft, Introduction and proposed goals and targets on sustainable development for the post-2015 development agenda"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4044140602workingdocument.pdf>

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2014) *"An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development"*. Available at: <http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/an-action-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>

United Nations (2013a) *"The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013"*, United Nations; New York, June 2013. ISBN 9789211012842. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/mdg-report-2013-english.pdf>

United Nations (2013b) *"Third session of the OWG (22-24 May) Co-Chair's meetings with the representatives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1878mgsummaryowg3.pdf>

United Nations (2013c) *"Statement from the Food and Agriculture Cluster of the NGO Major Group for the thematic discussion at the third session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in New York, 22-24 May, 2013"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=9500&menu=1562&nr=745>

United Nations General Assembly (2012) *"The Future We Want"*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on July 27 2012, A/RES/66/288. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E

United Nations/Technical Support Team to the Open Working Group on SDGs (2013a) *"TST Issues Brief: Food Security and Nutrition"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1804tstissuesfood.pdf>

United Nations/Technical Support Team to the Open Working Group on SDGs (2013b) *"TST Issues Brief: Sustainable Agriculture"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1802tstissuesagriculture.pdf>

World We Want (2013) *"Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in the post-2015 Development Agenda Informal Consultation with CFS Stakeholders Rome, 11 February 2013 Co-Chair's Summary"*. Available at: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/372061>

World We Want, FAO, WFP (2013a) *"High Level Consultation (HLC) on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in the Post 2015 Development Framework Joint Chairs and co-Leads Synthesis Report"*. Available at: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1797synthesisdoc2.pdf>

World We Want, FAO, WFP (2013b) *"The e-Consultation on Hunger, Food and Nutrition Security. Collection of the contributions received from the 19th November 2012 to 10th January 2013"*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/post2015/>

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SIANI's mission is to enable sustainable food security and nutrition for all. SIANI is a member-based network that supports and promotes Swedish expertise and provides an open and interactive platform for engagement and dialogue in a global context



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