

Resilience in food security

Recommendations

from the implementation partnership

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Background

Food security¹ has been a key issue of Austrian development policy for many years and as such is also anchored in the *Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy*.

Against the background of multiple global crises (hunger, climate, biodiversity, wars and armed conflicts, COVID-19 or other health threats), a so-called **implementation partnership** between administration, civil society and academia on the topic of *resilience in food security* was established at the second SDG Dialog Forum (6 and 7 October 2022). The concrete result of this implementation partnership are the present recommendations for action for Austrian development cooperation. These recommendations are intended as input for upcoming or already started strategy processes (primarily the *Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 – 2027* or the Africa Strategy).

In addition, food security should also be taken into account in the remaining sections of the strategies, for example in the context of integrated water resources management, in the HDP nexus to strengthen resilience in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, conflict and other crises. Particularly, aspects of fragility and the *leave no one behind* principle of the 2030 Agenda should be taken into account.

The recommendations for action are based on the findings of a project implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) *Resilient and Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems*² and a workshop in April 2023, attended by representatives from administration, ADA, civil society, academia and business – and on considerations of the organizational group of the implementation partnership³ respectively.

Approach & recommendations

The recommendations presented below can be clustered into four categories:

1. Further development of the substantive approach for the *Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 – 2027*
2. Improving the framework conditions for concrete project or program work
3. Additional funds for food security in the Global South
4. Food security as an issue of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)

¹ This paper uses the concept of food security, which is used by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and serves as a common point of reference for the actors of the implementation partnership. We understand food security comprehensively, taking into account the findings of the 15th report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. The report expanded the dimensions of availability, access, use and stability by the dimensions of agency (the ability of individuals and groups to make decisions about their diet and food systems) and sustainability. See in particular p. 9, Committee on World Food Security: Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. Available at: www.fao.org/3/ca9733en/ca9733en.pdf

² ADA: Projects: Resiliente und nachhaltige Ernährungs- und Agrarsysteme. Available at: www.entwicklung.at/en/projects/detail-en/resiliente-und-nachhaltige-ernaehrungs-und-agrarsysteme

³ University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Coordination Office of the Austrian Bishops Conference (KOO), Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs Austria (BMEIA), Global Responsibility

1. Further development of the substantive approach for the Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 – 2027

The points below are listed measures in the *Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2022 – 2024* under the priority **A.1.a Food, water and energy security**. We suggest modifying these measures for the next Three-Year Programme in the following way (in green and bold).⁴

- Rural governance, inclusive and gender-equitable participation and advocacy.
- Fair, equitable, *secure* access to land, *water, food and other resources*, especially for marginalized and vulnerable groups (such as the landless, IDPs, indigenous people, people with disabilities, etc.), *with special attention to the needs of women*, girls and *young people*.
- Focus on the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas.
- *Free and equal access to seeds* and support for smallholder seed systems (*including indigenous ones*) for the production of food (*no promotion of genetically modified organisms within the framework of ADC*).
- Promotion of smallholder agriculture, e.g. by promoting cooperative structures.
- *Strengthening the rights of smallholders*.⁵
- *Promotion of an agro ecological approach, taking into account the 13 principles of agro ecology, as well as local circumstances and challenges*.⁶
- Promotion of organic farming.
- Promotion of agricultural production while preserving biological diversity, protecting ecosystems and avoiding land degradation.
- Sustainable management of natural resources including avoidance of food losses and waste, low consumption of resources and low environmental pollution.
- Sustainable development of the local economy (e.g. increasing local added value and regional marketing).
- Training, capacity development and empowerment (particularly counseling services) *particularly with regard to women and girls*.
- Ensuring *adequate* food.⁷
- *Increased use of digital prediction mechanisms*.

2. Improving the framework conditions for concrete project or program work

Multiple crises as well as major social or political changes in the partner countries reduce the long-term planning of projects, while at the same time longer-term interventions are required in order to

⁴ In addition, the HDP-Nexus and the integrative water resource management are to be included in a strategy.

⁵ Based on a human rights-based approach, measures that strengthen the rights of smallholders are to be taken.

⁶ See Committee on World Food Security (Jul 2019): 14th Report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, Agroecology and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. Available at: www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf

⁷ According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the right to adequate food includes regular, constant and unrestricted access to food of adequate and sufficient quantity and quality, conforming to cultural traditions. See OHCHR: About the right to food and human rights. Special Rapporteur on the right to food. Available at: www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food/about-right-food-and-human-rights

be able to work more effectively. In order to react to these changed framework conditions, the following procedural changes are suggested.

Integrative system development & adaptive project management

A rigid focus on predetermined project designs can often impede adaptability to changing conditions. Flexibility is crucial in project management in order to react to changing conditions and ensure that project partners effectively achieve the defined project goals despite unforeseen circumstances or a changing project environment.

In order to promote improvements in project work, we propose the following measures:

- **Participatory planning:** By including all relevant stakeholders (particularly the local population and local partners) in the planning process, different perspectives and experiences can be taken into account. This enables an integrative system development, with a stronger focus on the participants' needs and contexts.
- **Flexible project management:** Adaptive project management can be used to increase the flexibility of the project and to react more effectively to changes. An iterative approach is followed, allowing for regular reviews and adjustments to respond to new insights and challenges. We think it makes sense to discuss alternative project planning approaches such as the theory of social change and the consistent application of PCM planning methods.
- **Upgrading of monitoring in the planning and implementation of projects:** The Logical Framework Approach serves as a good basis; however, its monitoring should be upgraded as a decisive element for ensuring the project's success. Monitoring can be used decisively to detect changes in the project environment and to adapt projects accordingly. Ideally, this requires appropriate resources.

Long-term Cooperation

Long-term project contracts promote the sustainability of activities, especially in structural developments in partner countries that require time and cooperation over more than three years. They enable long-term visions, the implementation of sustainable measures, and the continuity of cooperation. With stable framework conditions and sufficient time, strategic decisions can be made and long-term goals can be pursued in order to bring about lasting changes and achieve long-term effects.

A long-term perspective could be facilitated by the following measures:

- **Long-term financing:** The provision of long-term financing options is crucial to enable continued investment in sustainable development projects. This can be done through multi-year financing agreements that run over a longer period of time.
- **Building partnerships:** Long-term partnerships between different stakeholders, including governments, civil society, academia and business, are key and should be strengthened. By building such collaborations, *ownership* can be generated and a wide range of resources, knowledge and expertise can be mobilized to drive long-term change and ensure activities remain sustainable.

- **Capacity development and training:** The strengthening of skills and competences at individual, institutional and system level is an important step to implement necessary measures and support sustainable developments. Stakeholders can be empowered through targeted training, educational programs, organizational development and knowledge management (sharing of insights, best practices, etc.).

Innovation

Complex challenges call for new solutions and approaches. Adaptive project management and long-term cooperation should make it possible to try and test new instruments and methods in order to promote innovation and enable new solutions. This also requires a corresponding willingness to take risks and flexibility on the part of the sponsors.

Two possible approaches are outlined below:

- **Innovative financing:** In order to be able to invest more in prevention instead of emergency aid, financing mechanisms need to be linked to early warning systems to reduce the impact of weather disasters. Forecast-based financing should be examined.
- **Inclusive system development (ISD)⁸ approach in the sense of multi-stakeholder partnerships:** identifying partnerships between governments, companies, civil society and development partners and overcoming barriers for disadvantaged population groups. This includes networking of market players, creation of business opportunities, better access to finance and strengthening capabilities for sustainable structural changes. Through these partnerships, locally adapted solutions can be developed that build communities' resilience to food security and improve their ability to cope with disruptions and shocks.

Coordination of all actors in the sense of coherence and higher effectiveness

Aligning all stakeholders for coherence and greater effectiveness is crucial to achieve common goals and achieve sustainable results.

This coordination can be promoted by the following measures:

- **Establishment or use of existing coordination mechanisms:** The creation of specific or the use of existing structures and platforms enables effective exchange and cooperation between the actors.
- **Coupling of bilateral and multilateral projects,** e.g. with the World Food Program (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), enables better cooperation and synergies in order to achieve common goals of food security more effectively.

⁸ Such as approaches such as *Market Systems Development* (MSD), also known as *Making Market Work for the Poor* (M4P), or a *Political Economy and Power Analysis* (PEPA) approach.

3. Additional funds for food security in the Global South

As a result of multiple global crises and the predicted consequences of the climate crisis, the need for financing for food security has increased significantly. Additional funds for bilateral and multi-lateral development cooperation and for humanitarian aid are crucial in order to cushion the consequences of the crises and to build resilient local food systems in the long term.

4. Food security as an issue of policy coherence (PCSD)

In addition to the coordination of development policy actors in Austria, *policy coherence for sustainable development* (PCSD) can and should make a significant contribution to food security in the Global South. It is proposed that, within the framework of the discussions on the new *Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 – 2027*, a thematic focus on the topic of *food security* be considered as part of the concrete implementation of PCSD in the years 2025 to 2027.

A concrete starting point could be the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), an intergovernmental instrument of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that works to strengthen world food security by drafting joint strategies and voluntary guidelines that secure food and human rights on food.