

SUMMARY FROM THE FOOD SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ROUNDTABLE

May 16, 2016

Background

On May 16, 2016, as part of a series of Feed the Future-hosted roundtable discussions, a diverse group of 49 experts convened in Washington, DC, for a discussion on Food Security & the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as part of a broader discussion on how changes in the global food system can best achieve food security and nutrition, poverty reduction, climate resilience, gender equality and inclusive growth.

The roundtable explored visions for successful pathways to achieve food security, fueled by research and innovation in international development policies and programs. This document offers a brief summary of the roundtable discussions and highlights several key takeaways.

Discussion Summary

Panel 1, *Working Together for a Food-Secure 2030: Vision and Pathways*, took stock of increased complexity in global development challenges, including a wider range of more ambitious goals and greater diversity among development actors. The SDGs call for a bold vision to reach zero hunger by 2030 (Goal 2), in the broader context of 16 other goals and 169 targets designed to coordinate actions in all countries. Food security is central to attaining the SDGs, with special synergies to poverty reduction, health and wellbeing, climate action, gender equality and inclusive and sustainable growth.

A dynamic agricultural sector remains vital for generating and linking the supply and demand for food. Increasing productivity, resilience and competitiveness in agricultural value chains feed growth in other sectors, enabling non-agricultural households to access safe and nutritious foods. Efforts to eliminate poverty and ensure food security, though, will need to take into account urbanization and the growth of secondary and tertiary cities as key mid-points and end-points in the agri-food system. Improvements in the supply chain and food infrastructure can help ensure that food can be quickly moved from farm to processor to market. Targeted social protection and safety net programs, particularly in fragile states and for the most vulnerable populations, will also be critical for achieving SDG 2 and other SDGs.

Participants expressed a desire to increase efforts to address climate change, environmental constraints, conflict and fragility while continuing to demonstrate the political will to reach marginalized people. They also noted that innovations in information and communications technology, biotechnology and remote sensing; social safety nets; and new policies that improve enabling environments are critical for integrating approaches to achieving the SDGs.

Panel 2, *Transforming Lives: Nutrition, Health and Well-Being*, identified the biological and socioeconomic mechanisms by which agri-food systems contribute to human development. Participants noted that food security is not just about calories, but about all the nutrient deficiencies, diet-related diseases and food-borne illnesses that limit our ability to learn and earn. In 2015 over 159 million children under 5 were stunted, over 40 million children overweight, and many more poor and food-insecure people are affected by other forms of malnutrition. Improving nutrition requires both increased access to healthy foods and reduced use of unhealthy foods. Diets and nutrition are less well measured than agricultural

production; participants noted that the success of the Demographic and Health Surveys in driving and measuring results may spur a new push for more and different kinds of data on the nutritional aspects of food security.

Panel 3, *Transforming Agriculture: Research, Innovation and Technical Change*, considered how today's sometimes unsustainable and inadequate food production methods can change to meet tomorrow's challenges. Participants commented that total investment levels in both public agricultural research and private-sector innovation are still far too low, especially in the places that need it most. They noted that concerted action is needed to reallocate funds from farm subsidies that prolong unsustainable production patterns to research, infrastructure and innovation for climate-smart adaptation and mitigation. Successful public sector investments fuel private sector growth throughout the agro-food system, from seed multiplication and input supply to farming, food processing and value chain services. Such investments are often most inclusive when they incorporate gender-specific approaches and smallholders can adopt and adapt technologies.

Panel 4, *Inclusive Growth: Gender and Marginalized Populations*, addressed actions to reach people who are food insecure due to discrimination based on gender, age or ethnicity, as well as extreme poverty or geographic isolation. Interventions designed to be inclusive can drive an agricultural transformation that reaches disempowered smallholders, landless rural households and the urban poor. Research on gender has led the way toward a focus on empowerment as the path to inclusive growth, with the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index bringing new data on gender disparities in five domains: production, resources, income, leadership and time.

Participants in Panel 5, *Sustainable Growth: Climate Change and Ecology*, noted that climate and resource constraints are radically changing agricultural environments, and noted a need for rapid innovations to limit harm, especially for the poorest. Successful adaptation cannot be achieved in isolation, but requires shared innovation and openness to trade. Climate models, remote sensing and ICT provide promising new tools. For example, Ethiopia and other countries are using soil maps to improve fertilizer blends, improving productivity and resilience despite severe demographic, climatic and ecological challenges.

Takeaways

Development actors have diverse visions of how to achieve a food-secure 2030, but there is a need to focus on the poorest people left behind and to steer diets toward healthier and more sustainable foods. Participants expressed that both these and other aims for a food-secure 2030 can be met by investing in the productivity and resilience of marginalized groups, achieving an inclusive transformation of the agro-food system that accelerates growth of the non-farm sector in both urban and rural areas. Successful strategies anticipate climate change and resource depletion, creating and using new technologies and improved enabling environments.

DISCLAIMER: This is a synopsis of the roundtable discussion conducted on May 16, 2016. It does not necessarily represent the views of the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Government, or of the individual participants of the roundtable event.