



Theory of change towards a world without hunger and malnutrition

by the SDG2 Roadmap Group

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The theory of change shall serve as the raison d'être and strategy of the group. It shall be a living document and is foreseen to remain internal.

1. About us

Ending hunger and malnutrition has been a priority for many donors for at least a decade. Over the last two years, an informal group of senior officials from different donor agencies active in agriculture and food and nutrition security has come together to exchange views on how to continue our efforts within the framework of SDG2.¹ The participants in this group share a common vision for **eliminating rural poverty, hunger and malnutrition through sustainable agriculture-led growth that does not exceed planetary boundaries**. Our discussions aim at identifying obstacles to achieving SDG2 that can be addressed through our cooperative action. We believe the convergence of donor perspectives on the way forward for SDG2 provides a basis for joint action and outreach efforts. This can generate the political momentum and accelerated progress needed to help countries achieve their goals. However, we are fully aware that SDG2 contains multiple linkages with other SDGs and that making progress on sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security implies taking a holistic perspective. This group emphasizes that addressing climate change and maintaining focus on the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target is crucial for the fulfilment of SDG2.

2. Rationale for our engagement – what drives us

Global hunger spiked sharply at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained at stubbornly high levels over the last two years, affecting about 9.2% of the world population in 2022 compared with 7.9% in 2019. Worryingly, hunger is still rising in all parts of Africa, and in Western Asia and the Caribbean (SOFI, 2023). The number of countries bearing the 'triple burden' of malnutrition - undernutrition, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies - is also making insufficient progress.² Smallholder farmers can play a critical role in reducing malnutrition and undernourishment. They produce most of the food in developing countries but make up a large proportion of the world's hungry. This is recognized in the SDG2 target of

¹ Representatives from USAID, Gates, DFID, BMZ, EU COM, DFAT, MFA NL, and MEAE-FR have been active participants in the group

² The State of Food Insecurity 2018 notes that the world is currently not on track to meet global targets on the triple burden and instead - undernourishment, anemia for women of reproductive age, a type of micronutrient deficiency, and obesity are all growing.

doubling smallholder productivity and incomes.

The goal to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will not be fulfilled by continuing business-as-usual. Current global trends – increasing conflict, variable weather patterns driven by climate change, constrained resources, limited access to productive resources, income and technology, and a growing population in many regions – threaten worldwide food and nutrition security. Given that agricultural production is heavily impacting climate change and vice versa, we recognize the urgency of aligning agri-food systems transformation with climate action. We need additional, concerted efforts from governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society. Focus, political will, and ideas, as well as increased efficiency through better cooperation and coherence are needed as much as additional investments. As a donor community, we want to increase our development impact, catalyze additional resources, and spur policy changes and actions to realize SDG2, in support of country-led efforts

Joint vision – what we are like-minded about...

- **A world free of hunger and malnutrition,**
- Productive and sustainable agriculture and food systems focusing on **smallholders' productivity** and **access to markets,**
- The **transformative power of agri-food systems** to raise incomes, increase food and nutrition security, generate decent employment for both women and men in rural areas, including outside the agricultural sector, and have a stabilizing effect on peace and security,
- Countering the severe impact of **climate change** on agriculture and food supply and foster **agricultural practices which** use natural resources sustainably,
- Our commitment to the Paris Agreement and its overarching goal to **limit the global average temperature increase** to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as well as its recognition that **adaptation is a global challenge faced by all,** and the need to **strengthen national adaptation efforts,**
- Increased **resilience** of people and institutions against food crises caused by extreme natural events and violent conflicts and crises,
- **Equal opportunities for all,** including those in rural areas and especially focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment,
- **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture:** producing more as well as qualitatively better and healthier food; promoting nutritious consumption while using fewer natural resources,
- Guaranteeing **equitable access to productive resources** and making agricultural market systems work better for smallholders, including women.

3. Focus of our attention

Sustainable agricultural development that enables small-scale food producers to double agricultural productivity and incomes (2.3) while maintaining ecosystems that strengthen capacity for adaption to climate change (2.4) is the primary focus of this group. While we are all deeply engaged in efforts to end malnutrition through joint action in different fora, and will continue to do so, concerted efforts to promote sustainable agriculture development are scarce. Our aim is to have an impact on poverty and hunger by focusing on sustainable diversified agriculture production by small-scale producers as well as strengthening the link to small and medium-sized enterprises. We will ensure that our actions aimed at achieving SDG2 are also linked to climate objectives of mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.

For this purpose, we will develop a consensus among donors on a roadmap for achieving SDG2 that will: a) develop an evidence base for improved decision-making, b) provide a framework for coordination on

key action areas; and c) generate political support and mobilize funding for agriculture, food security and nutrition, and sustainable food systems transformation, as relevant.

4. Problem description

With the trend-line in the historic decline in hunger shifting, now more than ever, there is an imperative to act if we are to achieve SDG2. For decades, under the MDG period, the world saw a decline in the number of hungry thanks to robust global economic growth and enabling national environments. Unfortunately, in the SDG era, this trend seems to be reversing. Poverty and inequality are contributing factors to an overwhelmingly rural problem. Numerous studies confirm that investment in the agricultural sector is more effective at reducing poverty than investment in other sectors. Further, the poorer the society, the greater this advantage is. Increasing productivity is the key to taking advantage of agriculture's poverty reducing potential given the sector's dependence on limited natural resource inputs such as land and water. Agricultural productivity in many developing countries lags that of developed countries, and the rate of productivity growth in Sub-Saharan Africa has been far below that of every other region. This means **responsible investments in the agri-food sector have by far the most potential to create decent and productive employment and to reduce hunger and malnutrition**. To realize this potential, responsible investments need to sustainably increase productivity and income across a broad range of commodities, not just staple crops, and generate agricultural growth that is inclusive, climate resilient and nutrition- sensitive.

Demographic trends add to the complexity of the problem, especially in Africa where rural poverty is increasingly concentrated. The global rural population will continue to grow at least until 2050, despite extensive emigration, and average farm sizes in developing countries are set to diminish even further. Nearly 440 million young African people are expected to enter the job market by 2030, at least half of them from rural areas.³ The agri-food sector is an important source of economic opportunities for this youth bulge.

Sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth is needed, among other factors, to eliminate poverty, hunger and malnutrition. However, this growth is constrained by deteriorating land and water resources, the continuous and evolving threat of pests and diseases, and climate change. We are already exceeding safe limits in two thirds of the planetary boundaries, and are at risk of overshooting the critical 1.5°C target. **Extreme climate events were a contributing factor to food crises in 23 countries in 2017⁴, and weather extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity for 56.8 million people in 2023⁵**. The regions most susceptible to these risks are also the regions with the highest rates of poverty and hunger and the highest rates of population growth. Improving the sustainability of agriculture enhances the ability of farmers to adapt to, manage and mitigate these risks. Agriculture contributes to many of these risks. Including changes in land use, **agriculture accounts for one third of greenhouse gas emissions⁶** (mainly through methane and nitrous oxide); it accounts for up to 70 percent of total fresh water withdrawals, frequently in unsustainable ways; and many agricultural practices result in soil

³ World Bank and IFAD, *Rural Youth Employment*, July 2017. (https://www.bmz.de/de/zentrales_downloadarchiv/g20-/Rural_Youth_Employment_-_WB-IFAD-Synthesis_Study_DWG.pdf)

⁴ Global Report on Food Crisis, 2018

⁵ Global Report on Food Crisis, 2023

⁶ FAO. 2023. Greenhouse gas emissions from pre- and post-agricultural production processes – Global, regional and country trends, 1990–2020. FAOSTAT Analytical Brief Series No. 65. Rome.

degradation⁷. While many agricultural systems are currently contributing to climate change, **agriculture can also provide solutions with practices that ensure adaptation to climate change while mitigating its effects.**

5. Overview of most relevant challenges to be addressed:

As a group of likeminded donors, we note the UN High Level Political Forum’s call to action – that the available evidence for agriculture is limited, and urgent, scaled- up action is required to support small and medium scale producers. Over time we can work together to develop and understand what we can support better than other actors in this system.⁸ However, we have emerging agreement on global public goods, such as innovation, monitoring and alignment on resources as meaningful contributions that we can make. To this end, the table below lists challenges and solutions that we are seeking to overcome together in some manner.

Table 1 – Summary of Challenges

Current Status	Impact of problem	Actions needed to address challenge (investments)	Outcome of actions	Long term goal
Urgency of climate change and role of agriculture and food systems in responding not adequately appreciated	Global agriculture and food systems continue to be major contributor to climate change with smallholders amongst the most vulnerable to its impacts	Scaling-up adoption of climate smart agricultural and agro-ecological practices, transforming food systems towards sustainable models and helping agriculture adapt to climate change	Global agriculture and food systems become sustainable	SDG2 & SDG13
Gender transformative approaches in agriculture and food systems are not fully defined nor adopted	High risk that investments are underperforming by not addressing the root causes of gender inequalities in agriculture and food systems.	Identify and support gender transformative approaches in agriculture and empower women to have greater decision-making power across the food system.	Gender gaps in agriculture and food systems are closed which makes donor interventions more effective.	SDG2 & SDG5
Weak agricultural statistical systems.	Unable to precisely identify gaps and track progress. Limits ability to understand the impact of investments.	Closing the Ag Data Gap by implementing the “50 by 2030 initiative” and establishing a financing and governance structure for implementation	Agricultural statistics are available in L/LMICs.	Achieving SDG2 Agricultural Targets (2.3 & 2.4)
Lack of consensus about the highest impact interventions in ending hunger.	Resources are spread on multiple types of interventions instead of being concentrated on the few most effective	Build consensus on effective interventions for increasing smallholder productivity and sustainability simultaneously through a special issue journal	Global consensus informs donor and national government programmatic priorities.	

⁷ The Status of the World’s Soil Resources (SWSR) report by FAO and ITPS (2015) shows that about 33% of global soils are moderately or highly degraded.

⁸ UN 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

		Ceres2030 partnership		
No reliable estimate of the level of investment required to achieve the SDG2 agricultural development targets.	Unable to assess the adequacy of current national government and donor investments.	Design the modeling framework and estimate global costs for effective agricultural interventions and achieving SDG agricultural targets Ceres2030 partnership	Financial framework informs future donor and national government investment commitments and accountability mechanisms.	
International agricultural development architecture needs strengthening and synergies.	Lack of articulation among the resources allocated Overlapping projects, strategies among donors	Ensure renewed and strengthened donor alignment in areas of comparative advantage and through multi-donor initiatives for agricultural development by mapping donor activities with regards to SDG2.3 and collaborate through existing international initiatives such as the Sahel Alliance or GAFSP, EU HARDs, Global Governance for Agricultural Development and Food and Nutrition Security, Chatham House Outcome oriented ODA system	Improved coherence of global agricultural development architecture improves efficiency and effectiveness of efforts. Increased volume of coordinated funding, especially in poor, fragile and conflict-affected countries.	
Ag Research activities are not as impactful as they could be	Insufficient resources for underutilized species and mixed farming systems Poor coordination between ag research investments from CGIAR, G20 countries and agribusinesses Historic staple crop focus and shifting Perennially under resourced with inefficient decision making and allocation	Joint effort for the “development of smart innovation through research in agriculture,” DeSIRA Crops to End Hunger launched to address plant- breeding needs.	The global research system addresses priority challenges facing smallholder farmers and global agriculture through science and innovation.	
Lack of alignment of private sector activities to policy priorities within the agricultural sector.	Incoherence between development financing for public and private sector agriculture investments	Efforts of GAFSP, IFAD, WB and others to bring together grant and concessional financing towards the same country-level priorities, aligned with SDG2. Coordination on Markets Systems and Development Programming	Cooperate more effectively with the private sector to support stronger alignment to the SDG2 implementation process and make agricultural	

			markets work better for smallholders.	
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6. Landscape of actors

The SDGs can only be realized with a strong commitment to multi-stakeholder partnerships and global cooperation (SDG 17). While official development assistance from developed countries increased by 66 percent between 2000 and 2014, **humanitarian crises brought on by conflict, natural disasters, and extreme climate events continue to demand more financial resources and aid**. In parallel to these trends, in the past 30 years, private and public investments in agriculture and rural areas have not grown to meet demand. Especially with regard to SDG2, **a multi-stakeholder effort, in particular with the private sector, is needed to end hunger and malnutrition sustainably** and to transform rural areas in coherence with our partners' national strategies and planning.

We will make recommendations and strive to convince our partners and other stakeholders that further action to achieve SDG2 – within the constraints of 1.5°C of climate change – is urgently needed until 2030. Nevertheless, a donor led roadmap could address critical issues by acting in concert with others. Setting a good example could leverage greater funding from other key players.

a) National government engagement

We cannot reach our objectives without closely cooperating with our partner governments and in alignment with their strategies and policies. Increased efforts by national governments are especially needed to **close the data gap on SDG2**. Moreover, we support national government efforts to **raise domestic financing** for the agricultural sector, like stated in the Malabo Declaration of the African Union.

With regard to SDG 2.3, increased responsible investments are needed to **enhance capacity for agricultural productivity**, both from domestic and foreign resources. However, the global agriculture orientation index — defined as agriculture's share of government expenditure divided by the sector's share of gross domestic product (GDP) — fell from 0.38 in 2001 to 0.24 in 2013 and to 0.21 in 2015. Presenting concrete action needed to reach SDG 2.3 might convince national governments to invest more in specific action areas.

b) Catalytic ODA

Development partners will play a crucial role in achieving SDG2 by 2030. This is why G7 partners underlined their responsibility in 2015, committed in the Elmau Declaration to lift 500 million people from hunger and malnutrition by 2030. This is also why GAFSP has set SDG2 as its primary objective and 2030 as its end-date and seeking to raise significant donor and private capital to meet the needs in developing countries.

To get there, there is an **urgent need not only to mobilize additional funds but also to jointly agree on the most effective interventions** in order to reach the very ambitious goals until 2030.

Depending on the priorities of each donor, the joint work within the SDG2 roadmap group allows donors to stick to existing priorities and at the same time to build networks to pursue jointly additional initiatives.

c) Private sector engagement

Agriculture is a highly entrepreneurial sector driven by small and large private investors, with the

largest investment coming from individual farmers themselves, including smallholders. To meet the SDG2 targets investments in agriculture, food production, storage, transport, processing and the food economy in general need to increase dramatically. Development partners can assist by **supporting the enabling environment for investments, the availability of affordable credit, reducing risks through public-private partnerships and reinforcing international guidelines for responsible agricultural investment.**

There is a need for an effective agricultural finance agenda that supports both domestic and international investment. Key barriers for finance are access to rural financial services, land tenure, unpredictable regulatory frameworks for investment, ticket size, collateral requirements that smallholders cannot meet, lack of insurance products that cover specific risks like climate risk or currency risks. These barriers can be overcome. By making SDG2 a political priority and by funding projects within certain action areas that aim to reach the SDG2 targets we can mobilize the private sector and leverage additional funding.

Business enterprises involved in agriculture and food systems should focus on mitigating and managing risks to maximize positive and avoid negative impacts on food security and nutrition, relevant to their context and circumstances. Business enterprises have a responsibility to comply with national laws and regulations and any applicable international law, and act with due diligence to avoid infringing on human rights. Among the important principles actors should comply with, the Principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems (RAI) and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), launched by Committee on World Food Security (CFS), are central. Fairtrade certification systems can provide an effective way for agribusinesses to guarantee a minimum fair payment for farmers' work and can help eliminate child labor and modern slavery from the supply chain whilst promoting economic empowerment of women farmers.

Many global agribusinesses are recognizing that the sustainability and profitability of their business models rely on smallholders themselves – and producer associations – having sustainable and profitable business models within the supply chain. Forward-thinking agribusinesses are investing in doubling smallholder productivity and incomes, which is the same ambition as SDG2.3. Because they invest far larger amounts in agriculture than donors do, agribusinesses are likely to make a far greater contribution to SDG2 than donors can. As a donor group we can encourage agribusinesses to further raise their ambitions, invest even greater sums in smallholder productivity and incomes and report on their contributions to SDG2.3.

d) International framework

The SDG2 roadmap group recognizes the **need to work with international organizations and coordination mechanisms to advocate for the need to act jointly**, to focus on certain action areas and to invest additional funds. These include coordination mechanisms within the UN system, such as the Economic and Social Council, which has the mandate to coordinate the specialized agencies of the UN, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)⁹ and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This also includes adherence to the 1.5°C Paris Agreement and other international climate goals, as well as working with informal coordination mechanisms among governments, notably the G7 and G20, which have come to play a key role in global governance for agriculture and food and nutrition security.

⁹ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/Critical-Emerging-Issues-2016/HLPE_Note-to-CFS_Critical-and-Emerging-Issues-2nd-Edition__27-April-2017_.pdf