

18,000 children died today from hunger: Long live the Madrid Process!

Jose Luis Vivero Pol
*Associated member of the Chair of Hunger and Poverty Studies of the University of Cordoba, Spain*¹

Let's be positive. Despite the rising figures of hungry people and the insufficient financial and political support given to the goal of hunger eradication, all of us - developmental workers, social researchers, activists, civil society leaders and the people - need to be optimistic about the results of the Madrid High-Level Conference "Food Security for All". Otherwise, we are doomed to collapse as a global civilisation. I wouldn't like to be there when the world reaches the maximum limit of hungry and destitute people that can be tolerated before social crisis and revolutions break out. Taking a more positive outlook, the Madrid meeting has yielded some remarkable results, including the launching of the Madrid Process of Consultations, additional financial commitments to increase agricultural productivity, and the clear message that the "business as usual" approach should be changed and the governance of the current global agricultural and food system reformulated. Hunger rates seem to have reached breaking point, and in the current era of global crises (environment, energy, food, finances, economies, de-regulated markets), decision makers appear determined to revamp the world food system that was first established in 1946 and later modified in 1974 after the food and oil crisis. Such developments are now taking place under the so-called "Madrid Process".

Quick analysis of the current situation

The food crisis is not yet over², and yet another one is already forecast for the next decades, as higher growing season temperatures could have a dramatic impact on agricultural productivity, farm incomes and food security, thus reducing food availability in many tropical developing areas by 40%.³ Although the credit crunch has lowered food prices, the global economic depression is likely to have a strong and long-lasting effect on emerging economies, developing countries and the most vulnerable sectors, namely the poor and hungry. Recession will curtail the income and employment of the most vulnerable and it will surely undermine investment in agricultural production. The billions spent on subsidies would be better invested in fostering agricultural growth and food production in rural areas, scaling up social programmes, school feeding and early childhood nutrition interventions.⁴

This growing hunger pandemic is not a time-restricted famine but the sudden worsening of a chronic problem that has affected millions of people for ages. Every human being starving to death has a political and economic impact on his/her community, region and nation. In that sense, two recent reports have pointed out the bold implications that food insecurity and

¹This document solely reflects the opinions and ideas of the author and does not represent in any form the official stance of CEHAP in relation to the topics contained in the text.

²FAO and OCDE foresee that food prices will certainly fluctuate and rise again in coming years.

³Mostly in areas where more than 3,000 million people live at present. See Battisti, D.S. y R. L. Naylor (2009). Historical Warnings of Future Food Insecurity with Unprecedented Seasonal Heat. *Science*, vol. 323. no. 5911, pp. 240 - 244

⁴Von Braun, J. (2008). The food crisis isn't over. *Nature* vol. 456: 701, 11 December.

hunger have for world security: they constitute a threat to peace.⁵ Migration is also spurred by deprivation and hunger in the countries of origin. Hunger is a structural problem and therefore it demands structural solutions, with consequences for institutional development and the governance of the food system. Despite these challenges, the international community so far lacks consensus on what type of global food system is needed to guarantee enough nutritious food for an increasing population, produced in such a sustainable way that reduces oil-dependency and deals the problem of climate change.

The dominant diagnosis of the causes of the persistence of chronic hunger and, in particular, of the 2007-2008 food crisis, is rather biased towards production-dominated explanations. There is a common understanding that the root problem has largely been food access, but the solutions presented to date focus on food availability and increasing production.⁶ There is growing concern about the unwillingness to question the direction taken by trade liberalisation in the sense that food is solely considered as a commodity and not as a livelihood or human right. The lack of compliance with the right to food barely appears in public speeches. Moreover, it is now clear that trade liberalisation has destabilised local food systems and hurt farmers, contributing to both the long- and short-term causes of the food crisis. The food crisis and its aftermath should be capitalised as a world-wide triggering event that paves the way for a new architecture of the global agricultural and food system, whereby a new structure geared towards feeding human beings is put in place.

Since 2005, FAO, IFAD and CGIAR have been the subject of international independent evaluations that have generally showed governance shortcomings and programmatic, administrative and personnel failures. The outcomes of those evaluations could shed light on elements for the new architecture and a more representative governance of the global food system. To date, we have seen manoeuvres to shift decision-making power regarding food and agriculture issues from the Rome-based agencies toward the US-based institutions, namely the UN Secretariat in New York and the Bretton Woods agencies in Washington.⁷ Considering the huge power leveraged by the US in those two headquarters by means of veto power in the UN Security Council, a blockage minority in the World Bank and practical control in the IMF, there seems to be a movement to seize the one country-one vote decision-making power that so far controls the global food system and turn it into a decision-making power in the hands of big stakeholders. This power shift would allow economically-developed countries (donors), newly-arrived rich players (philanthropic foundations) and huge agribusiness and food retail companies to exert comprehensive control over the governance of the 21st century food system. Along those lines, the recent G8 proposals to reshape the food and agriculture system are perceived as steps forward.

Brief history prior to the Madrid event

In 2008, the number of people suffering hunger reached 963 million, 70% of whom live in rural areas. Despite years of international anti-hunger efforts, hunger is on the rise. This long-term increasing trend has been boosted by the recent 2007-2008 food crisis, yielding a gloomy figure of yet a further 115 million undernourished people.⁸ Just today, 18,000 children under the age of five have died of malnutrition and associated diseases. The same number died yesterday and will die tomorrow.

This food crisis was the result of a deadly combination of rapid growth in demand for food, animal feed and biofuels, coupled with disruptions in agricultural supplies caused by poor weather and crop diseases, plus export restrictions in key countries.⁹ As a result, the year 2008 bore witness to many high-level events related to the major "world problem" during part of the year: the food crisis. Needless to say, this high-profile, media-catching issue was taken over by

⁶ World Bank (2008). World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁷ WETC Group (2008). Ciao FAO: another "failure-as-usual" food summit. Translator vol 5, n°1, June. ETC Group, Ottawa, Canada. http://www.etcgroup.org/en/materials/publications.html?pub_id=698

⁸ FAO Newsroom (15/12/2008): <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/8836/icode/>.

⁹ Battisti, D.S. y R. L. Naylor (2009). Historical Warnings of Future Food Insecurity with Unprecedented Seasonal Heat. Science, vol. 323. no. 5911, pp. 240 - 244

the financial crisis later on in the year.

The World Bank's New Deal on Global Food Policy was presented during the first term. It calls for building safety nets and increasing loans for agricultural production and trade liberalisation. Most analysts suggest this agenda will expand trade flows and transnational agroprocessing consortiums rather than supporting small scale farmers.

In June, the United Nations launched the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis¹⁰ (UN HLTF) and released a Comprehensive framework for action (CFA).¹¹ The CFA recommended immediate steps to provide emergency food assistance, boost smallholder production and adjust trade and taxation rules in support of national priorities. In the long term, the document recommended measures to ensure sustained growth in food availability through smallholder production, increased social protection systems, strengthened food security management systems and improved international food markets.¹² The CFA highly profiles the World Bank and the WTO as the two institutions that will contribute the most to help countries escape this food crisis by means of boosting trade.¹³ It gives the impression that the dominant debate is still focused on investment and growth in agriculture based on privatisation schemes, deregulation, and trade facilitation. This is exactly the approach that has failed.

The High-Level Conference on World Food Security, held in FAO Rome on 3-5 June, was mostly devoted to talk about the food crisis and measures to mitigate the effects. There were 181 official delegations, led by 42 heads of state and government and 100 ministers, with 60 NGOs and CSOs. No relevant decisions to rebuild the damaged global food system were made during that event, and only insufficient additional financial pledges were made by some countries, of which Spain was one of the most relevant.¹⁴ The final declaration called on the international community to increase assistance to the least developed countries.¹⁵ If we compare the amount of financial assistance given to the food crisis (\$12.3 billion US dollars) with recent figures on the amount of bail-outs given in the financial crisis (more than \$5 trillion so far), or with the global food bill in 2008 (\$8.5 trillion), the "anti-hunger world effort" seems meagre.¹⁶

The Doha Development Round collapsed in July over ongoing disagreements about whether WTO members had the right to protect their food security.¹⁷ The same month, the 34th G8 Summit (Hokkaido, Japan) released a statement on global food security, calling for reinvestment in the agricultural sector. Unfortunately, the fulfilment of G8 development-oriented commitments is rather bleak. Moreover, the Third High Level Meeting on Aid Effectiveness (Ghana, September) did not make relevant progress with regard to political and economic commitments. The conclusion was not to seek more funds but rather to make better use of the current ones.

¹⁰This task force comprises the UN agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and WTO, but not civil society. This is very enlightening: the goal is to reconstruct the food system without the producers and the consumers.

¹¹ United Nations (2008). Comprehensive Framework for Action. High-level Task Force on Global Food Crisis. New York

¹² The two-pronged approach is based on the Twin Track approach that was developed by the three Rome-based UN agencies (FAO, WFP and IFAD) in 2002, firstly presented in the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development.

¹³ Spieldoch, A. (2008). The Food Crisis and Global Institutions. Foreign Policy in Focus Commentary. August 5, 200. <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5442>

¹⁴ In total, over \$12 billion US dollars were pledged, with more than half being "old money" shifted out of health and education aid envelopes. Only nine countries and five international financial institutions made public commitments Polity Press, Oxford, 2004.

¹⁵ Declaration of the High level Conference on World Food Security: the challenges of climate change and bioenergy. http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/foodclimate/HLCdocs/declaration-E.pdf

¹⁶ Also worth noting is the existence of a gap between the rhetoric used so far and the practical actions undertaken. In January 2009, financial disbursements represented less than 20 percent of the financial commitments made at this High-level Rome Conference.

¹⁷ Spieldoch, A. (2008). The Food Crisis and Global Institutions. Foreign Policy in Focus Commentary. August 5, 200. <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5442>

Madrid Conference was not useless at all

Although it did not catch enough media attention, except regarding new financial commitments, the two-day meeting in Madrid did result in several promising outputs, which was no small feat given the short preparation period and the almost complete absence of previous negotiations. During the Madrid Conference, two additional financial commitments to increase agricultural productivity were announced by President Zapatero on behalf of a group of 15 countries, and by the USA just after the meeting. Zapatero pledged one billion euros in five years to food security and agriculture, an amount to be added to other pledges made by a group of 15 countries approached by Spain prior to this meeting. In total, US\$ 5.5 billion was promised. Considering that only 20 percent of financial commitments made during the High-Level Forum on Food Security (June, Rome) six months earlier were really disbursed, one might well doubt what impact this figure could have and even question whether the financial pledges made in Madrid are actually new or just a repetition in different fora of the same “promises”. Just after the meeting, the USA announced a similar contribution of US\$ 4.5 billion to fight food insecurity in the world. If we also add the US\$ 1.3 billion approved by the European Commission earlier this year, the Madrid Meeting can be seen to have yielded over US\$ 11 billion in additional funds. Indeed, if we look at the situation positively, between the Rome and Madrid meetings, the international community has raised US\$ 23 billion, a figure which verges close on the 30 billion of annual budget requested by Jacques Diouf to end hunger in 10 years.

The Madrid Process of Consultations was officially launched with the aim of reaching a consensus among a broad group of stakeholders on what the new world food system should look like. The result has been very positive as all stakeholders, particularly civil society groups and human rights defenders, were in favour of a broad, inclusive and transparent discussion process. The reform process needs to be studied thoroughly, all voices need to be heard and multilateral negotiations need to be advanced in order to reach a point of consensus, which would then enable a final world summit of heads of state simply to endorse the reform of the global food and agriculture system. The process should last one to two years, it will be steered by the HLTF and/or a “Contact Group”, whose members and composition are yet to be decided, and it will foster ample participation by states, civil society groups, producers’ associations, academia, private sector, private foundations, international institutions and any other stakeholder with an interest in food and agriculture (i.e. women, indigenous people, pastoralists, etc). In order to do that, there is an urgent need for two immediate actions: (a) to agree a road map, with milestones, deadlines and actors identified; and (b) to provide enough funds to secure ample and relevant participation. Spain could allocate a minor part of the one billion euros to support the Madrid Process.

The Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food, an idea which was initially conceived of during the G-8 meeting in Hokkaido, is gaining momentum, although its objective, mandate and different levels of decision making power should be defined as soon as possible.¹⁸ The GPAF has been supported by UN agencies, Bretton Woods Institutions, the European Commission and a number of countries including the USA. However, NGOs and CSOs have expressed serious concerns about the GPAF, especially its goal to share power between countries, private enterprises, private foundations and civil society groups. As long as the different levels of authority and responsibilities are not defined, there will be doubts about the fair intentions of this partnership. As an example, the Ministry of Social Development of Brazil, Patrus Ananias, did not mention the GPAF in his speech, and there were “behind-the-door” discussions about this issue, the membership of the contact group and the roles of existing food and agriculture institutions versus the creation of new institutions.

¹⁸ De Schutter, O. (2009). The Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food: a response grounded in the human right to food. Note prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. .

The Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) prepared by the UN HLTf received wide support from many delegations in Madrid, although some criticism and proposals to improve the CFA were also heard. For instance, Ban Ki Moon's proposal to enlarge the Twin Track approach¹⁹ that serves as a conceptual anti-hunger approach for the CFA with a Third Track that would incorporate the right to food as well as institutional and governance issues. This proposal was initially developed by a group of food security experts and included in the Cordoba Declaration.²⁰ A detailed independent analysis of the CFA was prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Dr Schutter, in which ideas to improve the human rights dimension of the CFA are proposed.²¹ Some relevant aspects raised by the Rapporteur are as follows: the CFA seems to be highly focused on the humanitarian dimensions of the food crises and the macro-economic policies to solve it, mostly based on food trade. However, crucial issues such as governance and accountability are weakly addressed. An excessive emphasis on international trade and private sector as key elements to solve the food crisis is included in the CFA.

Conflicting issues

The right to food should be at the forefront of the reform process and it should form the skeleton of the newly emerging global food system. This message was underlined by most high-profile attendants in Madrid²², as well as by all pre-conference statements prepared by NGOs and the UE. A clear discrepancy stands between the general claim expressed by a wide variety of stakeholders to position the right to food at the forefront of the new global food system and the final Madrid statement where the right to food, although specifically mentioned in the second paragraph, is only "a source of inspiration". Although one should stress the Madrid Declaration was neither circulated previously nor agreed upon between country delegations, it conveys a clear message on subtle movements by the UN HLTf to weaken the binding obligations enshrined in the International Pact of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by more than 155 states. Two examples of this weakened wording can be extracted from paragraph two of the Madrid Statement. Instead of "the states have a primary responsibility to respect, ensure, fulfil and promote the right to food", the statement says "the states have a primary responsibility to make their best efforts to respect, ensure, fulfil and promote the right to food". The second example is even more noticeable as the linguistic baroque artefact is rather unusual in diplomatic language: "States are encouraged to seek inspiration from the Voluntary Guidelines". There seems to be a clear intention to set back progress achieved in previous years with regard to the right to food.

The Financial Coordination Mechanism (FCM) to support smallholder farmers, an idea launched by Jeffrey Sachs with Spain's support, did not receive such welcoming support. Important players in the international arena, such as the UN Secretary General, President Zapatero, the EU or the Brazil Minister emphasised the need for no additional bureaucracy or new institutions to deal with this food crisis and its aftermath. The FCM was endorsed by several African Ministries prior to the Madrid meeting, as the main target of this fund is boosting African agriculture. Nevertheless, the FCM, an idea not discussed with other countries in Latin America or Asia, was straightforwardly proposed as a new global financial mechanism for all, under the aegis of the World Bank according to Sachs. Thus, this new institution that was presented at the very last moment, with no previous discussions and to be controlled by the World Bank, received numerous critics.

Finally, although everybody agrees with the idea of creating spaces where stakeholders other

¹⁹The Twin Track approach to food security was developed by FAO, IFAD and WFP. See FAO/IFAD/WFP (2002). Reducing Poverty and Hunger: The Critical Role of Financing for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development. Paper prepared for the International Conference on Financing for Development. Rome, February 2002.

²⁰The Cordoba Declaration on the Right to Food and the Governance of the Global Food and Agriculture System. http://www.srfood.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=61&lang=en

²¹De Schutter, O. (2008). A human rights perspective of the CFA: towards a unified UN response to the global food crisis.

²²Jacques Diouf, FAO Director General, and Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister, did mention it during their opening speeches, as well as UN Secretary General and several heads of delegations during their interventions.

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than sovereign states can discuss, propose and agree actions to produce greater quantities of food in a more sustainable manner and eradicate hunger, the initial proposal of the GPFA being controlled at the highest level by a selected group of donors, recipient countries, private enterprises, private foundations and some civil society representatives does not please many. Many voices have warned against the interest shown by many donors and UN institutions in engaging private partners at the highest level of decision making, an interest promoted and spurred on by the USA, where most private foundations are headquartered, and oddly welcomed by the UN Secretary General ²³ and other non-American states. Any proposal that undermines UN member states' decision making power should be treated cautiously, especially when powerful stakeholders motivated by benefits (i.e. agribusiness) and major private donors are mixed with small-peasants' associations, consumers and states. One should bear in mind that most private philanthropic foundations and agri-business transnationals are accountable only to the president of the USA, as their leaders and board of directors are usually US citizens. They do not have human rights obligations, nor are they held accountable vis-a-vis citizens or their constituency. The sooner the governing hierarchy of the new global food system is explained, the better for the discussion of other relevant and more technical aspects during the Madrid Process.

This process of thinking up and agreeing a new global food system, the goal of which is to secure the right to food and produce more food in a more sustainable way, is a matter of utmost interest to everyone. Let's open up possibilities for greater and better participation: long live the "Madrid Process".

Food for the "Madrid Process"

1.- Define a common route map for the interim period, so as to enable ample participation and a stronger consensus. There is a need to facilitate sufficient room for farmers', fishermen's, bushmen's and indigenous people's associations, women's groups and consumer organisations, NGOs and CSOs, ecologists, private foundations, academia, and private sector enterprises (small enterprise associations and big transnational groups). Those stakeholders should participate in consultative meetings and general conferences, although final decision-making events should be restricted to states. This route map could end in a final presidential summit during the Spanish presidency of the EU, where heads of state would endorse the previously agreed architecture of the global food system.

2.- Launching the Intergovernmental Panel on Food and Hunger, similar to that of IAASTD ²⁴ or the IPCC ²⁵, to elaborate ideas, compile and analyse current and coming international assessments on food and agriculture institutions (i.e. FAO, IFAD, CGIAR), commission papers and, finally, reach a consensus on recommendations for policy makers. This panel would provide a backstop to the different stakeholders involved in the Madrid process throughout the duration of the latter.

3.- Financial commitments to support the route map. In order to render operational the previous outcomes, financial commitments to guarantee the widest participation, level of representation, capacity for negotiation and technical support should be guaranteed. ²⁶ Spain could already allocate some funds from the one billion euro pledge to support the Madrid Process.

²³ Ban Ki Moon mentioned particularly the Gates and Buffet Foundations in his closing remarks at the Madrid Conference. ¹⁵ As Schmitt points out, at the end of the XVI century, princes who were unable to turn themselves into states had to simply abandon the international stage. Carl Schmitt, *El nomos de la tierra*, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Madrid, 1979, p. 139.

²⁴ The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, which 58 governments approved in April 2008, is the result of a six-year process involving 400 experts. (www.agassessment.org).

²⁵ <http://www.ipcc.ch>

²⁶ This would secure ample participation from civil society, private sector as well as high-level representatives from many small islands and least developed countries.

4.- Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. The Protocol establishes a new quasi-judicial function for the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, allowing it to receive communications from individuals and groups of individuals alleging violations of the right to food. It also establishes a trust fund to support countries.

5.- Research and training challenge for universities: the 1000 Universities Initiative. The rights-based approach to development should be part of the research and training agendas on development undertaken by universities and research centres. The 1000 Universities Initiative aims at creating a network of universities researching, training and raising awareness on political, economic and technical ideas to eradicate hunger and achieve sustainable food security for all.

6.- An Anti-wasting Global Fund: higher and predictable funds to avoid child deaths. There are 55 million undernourished children, of which 20 million are so severely undernourished that they are on the verge of death. As a first step, it is crucial to set up a Global Fund to treat those children with therapeutic feeding, so as to prevent their deaths. An estimate of the total cost of interventions should be undertaken immediately using current channels and institutions to implement already-proven actions to treat wasting.

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Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
C/ Goya, 5-7 pasaje 2ª - 28001 Madrid - Telf: 91 244 47 40 - Fax: 91 244 47 41 - E-mail : fride@fride.org
www.fride.org