

National Food Security Policy

Description:

The State has in place a national food security policy with an implementation and action plan (budget). A national policy or strategy for food security and/or nutrition is in place by way of a compilation of principles and statements directly and specifically guiding and coordinating government action, potentially towards implementation of the right to food.

Rationale:

A national policy or strategy for food security and might identify clear targets, goals or benchmarks for future political decisions, and make clear the orientation of the governments' policies. In particular, the national policy or strategy should be designed to focus on the situation of population groups that face discrimination and/or marginalization in order to have an impact on food insecurity. Additionally, it is an important step for the state to recognize its obligations and to bundle up its efforts towards the realization of the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food in all its facets.

A food security strategy or policy at the national level indicates that government is taking direct action on issues of food insecurity within the country, and implies that there is a public budget to support the implementation. While food security policies do not often have a normative approach, they imply that a process exists and that there is a space for potential action and participation within the government at various levels.

Policies and strategies on food security may be considered as measures to implement the right to food as long as they contain accountability mechanisms. National policies or strategies should ideally set a time frame for their implementation, including benchmarks or milestones with regard to intermediate steps on the way to reaching a certain target.

Method of measurement:

Yes or No.

If yes, it will be important to provide, when available, information and resources to the 1) action plan; 2) budget for implementation; 3) legal basis for implementation; 4) other relevant information in terms of operationalizing the policy

Data collection and source

Based on official documentation by the government. FAO, OHCHR, NHRIs, NGOs may provide information.

Disaggregation

If possible, regional disaggregation according to sub-administrative units (state, province, departments etc.) in terms of implementation and budgetary responsibility. The policy or strategy should be analyzed in terms of its sensitivity towards the situation of those parts of the population that face systematic marginalization and discrimination. Corresponding disaggregation will, therefore, be of great value.

Periodicity

Information is usually available as policies change or are adopted; data should be gathered or reviewed as changes occur.

Comments and limitations

The creation of national policies indicates initiative towards implementing food policy- and should align with the constitutional framework. Although there will be various food security policies at national level, many do not support the human right to adequate food and nutrition, or generally a human rights framework, and rather take an “access” perspective rather than tackling root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. Additionally, the question looms large whether fragments or parts of other national policies (e.g. on health etc.) do qualify as a national policy on food security or the right to food.

To understand whether or not a policy or strategy at national level is human rights based, the following criteria should be met:¹

- (a) Its formulation and implementation should comply with human rights principles, such as accountability, transparency and participation;
- (b) It should be based on a systematic identification of policy measures and activities derived from the normative content of the right to adequate food and the corresponding State obligations;
- (c) It should give particular attention to preventing and eliminating discrimination in access to food or resources for food and to the needs of the marginalized population groups. This requires a systematic analysis of disaggregated data on the food insecurity, vulnerability and nutritional status of different groups in society;
- (d) It should address all aspects of the food system, including production, processing, distribution, marketing and consumption, as well as other relevant areas, such as health, water and sanitation, education, employment, social security, and access to information;
- (e) It should clearly allocate responsibility for implementing the necessary measures and lay down a precise time frame;
- (f) It should define institutional mechanisms including the coordination between relevant ministries and between the national and subnational levels of government;
- (g) It should also identify the resources available to meet the objectives and the most cost-effective way of using them, including in times of severe resource constraints;
- (h) It should identify steps to ensure that activities of non-State actors are in conformity with the right to food.

¹Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), “The Right to Adequate Food”, Fact Sheet No. 34, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf>