

May 29, 2013

# Between policy and practice: the EU Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan

by BRECHT LEIN in FOOD SECURITY, POLICY COHERENCE FOR FOOD SECURITY

**Largely overshadowed by provisional [budget decisions on the European Development Fund](#), Development Ministers at yesterday's Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) endorsed a long awaited and crucial EU Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan.**

The Implementation Plan (IP), entitled "[Boosting food and nutrition security through EU action: implementing our commitments](#)", is the Commission's tardy response to an invitation from the FAC to design an operational framework to better coordinate EU and Member States' policies and programmes in the area of food and nutrition security. Whether the IP will actually be capable of doing so is the crucial question at hand, asked in this blog by [Brecht Lein](#).

The FAC requested an Implementation Plan by the *end of 2010* in its conclusions endorsing the [EU Food Security Policy Framework](#), one of the three communications (see below) that have now fed in to the IP. As such, the Plan is perceived as the operational closing piece of the EU's long-term policy response to the international food crisis evoked by soaring food prices in 2007/08. It complements more direct humanitarian-development approaches such as the [EU Food Facility](#) and EU-led multi-stakeholder instruments like the [AGIR](#) and [SHARE](#) initiatives in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa respectively.

## **Better late than never**

Speculation on the reasons for the excessive delay before reaching an agreement have ranged from administrative reorganisations at the Commission, to an overall lack of political drive from the Member States. Either way, the adoption of the IP is considered a milestone on the long road to a more concerted EU-wide approach to addressing global food insecurity and malnutrition.

The stated aim of the IP is to define an operational response for the EU to deliver on policy commitments made in three prior communications by the Commission. Notably, the previously mentioned Food Security Policy Framework, the [EU approach to resilience](#) as presented in October 2012 and the [EU Nutrition Policy Framework](#), issued in March 2013. The latter two were both also up for endorsement yesterday.

### **3 C's, joint programming and division of labour**

In order to improve the **Coherence, Complementarity and Coordination** (the “3 C’s”) of EU and Member States’ cooperation, the Plan is based on a “three-pronged” approach centred on:

1. **Enhancing political and policy dialogue** on food and nutrition security with partner countries, regional and global organisations and other stakeholders like civil society and the private sector.
2. Enhancing EU and Member States’ programmes, incl. **implementing joint programmes** where feasible, and including, but not restricted to, countries where joint programming is currently being carried out.
3. **Identifying interventions** for Europe and its Member States, jointly or according to the Code of Conduct on [Division of Labour](#), to contribute to global, regional and national efforts in combatting food and nutrition insecurity.

The above threefold approach is mainstreamed throughout **six policy priorities**, distilled from the afore- mentioned communications on food security, resilience and nutrition (see box). Since the IP is presented as a reporting and communicating commitment, improvements across these six priority areas will be presented in a joint report to the Council on a biennial basis from 2014 onwards, ending in 2020.

Policy Priority 1. Improve smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods

2. Support effective governance

3. Support regional agriculture and food and nutrition security policies

4. Strengthen social protection mechanisms, particularly for vulnerable populations

5. Enhance nutrition, in particular for mothers, infants and children

6. Enhance coordination between development and humanitarian actors to build resilience and promote sustainable food and nutrition security.

In order to better serve these reporting purposes, the IP foresees a **scorecard** with relevant performance criteria per policy priority. These criteria are formulated in a broad manner and are generic by nature (e.g. number and value of relevant programmes supported in X countries or at international level), as to allow for each Member State and the EU to tell its own story. Ideally, this should allow for reliable, regular information on EU and Member States' efforts and *“ensure accountability to policy commitments and further advance the aid effectiveness agenda in concrete terms”*. De facto, I sense it leaves much scope for the Commission and the Member States to continue their own strategies.

### **Pragmatism over ambition**

All in all, the IP constitutes a concise yet complete and fairly practical framework to guide a EU-wide approach to boost food and nutrition security in partnering developing countries. The overly pragmatic nature of the IP, in terms of broadly suggested interventions and the modest performance criteria however, could prove a serious impediment for it to gain the necessary traction at Member State level.

Frankly, the IP has everything you would expect in it, yet **nothing is specified in a way that allows a guarantee for concrete follow up.**

Bearing in mind the long and cumbersome drafting process of the IP, reflecting divergent levels of commitment from the Member States, it is all but certain whether, and in how far, this IP will actually guide EU and Member States' policies and programmes on food and nutrition security. Add to that the [mixed track record on division of labour](#), as well as the [initial nature of joint programming exercises](#), and it is safe to say that much will depend on how Member States take forward their commitments to a more coherent external profiling of EU and Member States external assistance programmes for enhanced food and nutrition security.

To conclude, despite its apodictic potential, for the IP agreed yesterday to have actual value, **the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.** Time will tell in how far this operational framework will actually be used as an implementation tool for joint action, rather than as an ex-post reference document to confirm fixed national strategies.

March 12, 2013

## Final window for development-proofing the CAP

by BRECHT LEIN

in EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY BY THEME, EU EXTERNAL ACTION, POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

This article was co-authored by Brecht Lein and Niels Keijzer (Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)).

The European Union is committed to [policy coherence for development](#) (PCD), and has identified global food security as one of the five key priority areas where EU policies should seek to have a positive impact or at least ‘do no harm’. But EU actors and development stakeholders seem to have difficulty in moving forward on two obviously interlinked questions – without an adequate monitoring mechanism (the “how” question) it is hard to actually prove the [development-impact of the CAP](#) (the “why” question). PCD efforts regarding the EU’s agriculture policy seem to have reached a **deadlock that only a political decision can break**.

Today (March 12<sup>th</sup>) the European Parliament (EP) has reserved a [six hour slot](#) of its plenary session in Strasbourg to adopt its position on the reform of the [Common Agriculture Policy \(CAP\)](#), based on a [report](#) adopted by its Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI).

After recent turmoil in Strasbourg – with COMAGRI threatening to exclude the plenary from voting on all proposed amendment, including the ones on monitoring the CAP’s development-impact – MEPs were ultimately granted a **final opportunity** to development-proof the CAP.

## Impact of the CAP on developing countries largely absent from discussions

One step away from upcoming inter-institutional negotiations between the European Council and the EP, stakeholders' perceptions on the scope for a last-minute “real reform” range from “[it's not too late](#)” to a “[ship that sailed at least a year ago](#)”. While environmental concerns, transparency and direct payment schemes are all the talk in the run up to the EP plenary vote on Wednesday (March 13<sup>th</sup>), considerations of the impact of the CAP on developing countries are largely absent from the discussion.

In late January, COMAGRI members gavelled through some 100 amendments, [distilled](#) from more than 7500 original amendments to the [Commission's 2011 proposal](#), some informed by opinions of other EP Committees. The outcome was a weakening of the Commission's proposals for a transition toward a more sustainable agro-food system. The vote triggered discontent both within and beyond Parliament – indeed, the EU farmers lobby organisation [COPA-COGECA](#) seems to be the only group welcoming the vote as a step “in the right direction”.

Especially in the area of greening, the CAP (if adopted in this form) would in no way live up to the EU's own position on how to reform global agriculture which it asked others to commit to during last year's [World Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro](#). Reactions from MEPs on COMAGRI's proposals have been mixed to say the least and some of the issues regarding greening-measures are likely to provide for **heated debates in the plenary**.

For various reasons, [development interests have not been given much attention in the CAP reform](#). With the obvious negative effects of dumping through export subsidies largely gone, there are indeed ‘bigger fish to fry’ when it comes to making sure EU policies do not undermine global food security. Also, developing countries have become a highly heterogeneous group and it is difficult to identify a common development interest. The CAP's inherent complexity as a policy further complicates its analysis in terms of impact, links and causality. However, given the huge portion of the EU budget that it covers, there have been strong calls by the European Parliament's Development Committee (DEVE), as well as by non-governmental actors and EU Member States to [look into options for systematically monitoring](#) how the CAP affects developing

countries.

## Development amendments to reach plenary floor as Agriculture Committee folds to criticism

[A decision by the EP President](#) as recent as last Friday, empowered COMAGRI to convene on Monday evening and to pare down the over 350 proposal that had so far been submitted ahead of the vote – a decision the President can take when there are over 50 amendments, but which he decided not to do for instance, in the case of the recently adopted [Plenary position on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy](#).

Among the amendments that were at risk of not even reaching the plenary, were the [amendments previously proposed by the DEVE Committee](#) in June 2012. DEVE argued that the CAP continued to have effects on third countries and therefore “must be carefully checked in the light of the Treaty obligation to ensure Policy Coherence for Development (PCD)”. In particular, DEVE proposed i) to integrate the CAP into the EU’s broader framework for PCD and measure its external impact; ii) to phase out export subsidies entirely; iii) address the EU’s dependence on protein crop imports; and iv) completely decouple direct payments from production.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, [Olivier De Schutter](#) repeatedly called for MEPs to support DEVE’s amendments, as [a last chance to development-proof the CAP](#), yet COMAGRI rejected them all in January.

Giving in to voices of disbelief and criticism on the undemocratic nature of the ‘extraordinary meeting’, COMAGRI president Paolo De Castro proposed last night in a remarkable [U-turn](#), not to pare back the over 350 proposals *en petit comité*, but to allow the plenary to vote on them after all.

If MEPs take seriously the EU’s engagement towards developing countries in the context of PCD as agreed to in the [2005 Consensus on Development](#) and towards food security as stipulated in the CAP reform proposal, then they should **grasp this final chance and vote in favour** of a systematic external monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of the EU’s agricultural policy

on developing countries and world food markets.