What Is the Role of Members of the European Parliament and of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly?
This brochure comes at the right time. For too many years, “food security” has been understood as relying on the provision of food aid to regions in crisis, or even as coming from the dumping, on international markets, of foodstuffs that are inexpensive because generously subsidized. The aid trap has sprung: the volume of aid has had to be increased all the more as these policies ruined developing countries’ less competitive local commodity chains. These countries have been pushed to open to cheap imported foodstuffs and produce commodities for export. The dependency of most least-developed countries rose in worrying proportions during the 1980s and 1990s. The food price crisis of 2007-2008 revealed this model’s limits. A new direction is now needed.

The right to food is the right of each individual to feed him- or herself; for those who earn a living farming, it is also the right to do so in viable conditions that provide them with sufficient income. Basing food security policies on the right to food is, therefore, entirely different from a humanitarian approach. It intends to support the capacity to produce, rather than maintain, dependency. It also demands participatory policies that elevate “recipients” to actors in their own destinies and involves them in the identification of both needs and solutions. This makes it necessary to assess policies to ensure that they benefit the most vulnerable and that they fight hunger sustainably. Simply increasing agricultural production does not allow this, especially when production is concentrated between the hands of the most competitive farmers and accelerates the marginalization of all those—the vast majority—who are not.

The Lisbon Treaty strengthens the reference to human rights in the European Union’s foreign relations. It is now time to take action. It is time for the European Parliament to demand that impact assessments on the right to food precede the conclusion of the European Union’s cooperation or association agreements. It is time for development cooperation policies to be brought into line with participatory national strategies that aim to realize the right to food. Such strategies are based on a mapping of food insecurity and that oblige governments to be accountable, as recommended in the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food adopted by the FAO Member States. It is time—high time—for developing countries to strengthen their capacity to feed themselves and for food aid to cease to be a substitute for agricultural production support policies. It is time to see agriculture as something other than a means to produce—to see it also as a means to increase the poorest farmers’ incomes and preserve land and the planet. It is my hope that this brochure will open the debate, and that it will serve as a guide for action.

The first Millennium Development Goal aims to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger around the world by 2015. We have a long way to go! Hunger is on the rise and now affects more than one billion people (cf. pgs. 2-4).

The incoherence of European policies weakens efforts to fight hunger. They may even contribute to rising undernourishment (cf. pgs. 5-7).

Yet, having enough to eat is a human right, and having policies coherent with this right is a legal obligation (cf. pgs. 8-9).

Members of the European Parliament have a major role to play in ensuring that the European Union (EU) fulfils its obligations, as do the members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (cf. pgs. 10-11).

This brochure aims to inform members of the European Parliament and of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and encourage their actions to make European policies more coherent with reducing world hunger.
More than one billion people suffer from hunger around the world. Hunger, which has been on a steady rise for the past fifteen years, kills 25,000 people every day. The rapid rise of food prices in 2007-8, followed by the global economic crisis, have made the situation worse.

Contrary to a preconceived notion, undernourishment is not the result of a world food shortage but of poverty which prevents victims of hunger from buying the food they need.

Paradoxically, it is farmers—whose role is to produce food—who often find it the most difficult to access food. They make up 80% of undernourished people. How can this be explained?

This situation was caused by ideologically-based decisions made by main international donors. For more than thirty years, these international donors have been convinced that economic liberalisation is the key to fostering development and overcoming hunger and poverty by enabling people to feed themselves on so-called ‘cheap food’.

On this basis, free trade has become the foundation for the rules agreed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Under the comparative advantage theory, a country is sure to win at the international trade game when it decides to specialize in producing a specific good and is more advantaged (or less disadvantaged) to produce it compared to other countries. In application of this theory, developing countries were forced to considerably lower the protection applied to their domestic markets with regard to imports. Opening markets in this way, however, places foodstuffs from mainly manual farming in competition with products from industrialised farms, often subsidized directly or indirectly by wealthy countries. The competition is so unfair that the former cannot compete with the latter. In these conditions, economic liberalisation can be compared to the freedom of a fox among chickens.

The market was also supposed to solve food insecurity problems. When world agricultural product prices seemed to be on a consistent downward trend, many developing countries were encouraged to obtain their food from the world market at low cost rather than invest in domestic production. Governments were pushed to limit their support, notably in the agricultural sector. The food, energy, financial and economic crises that have had a cumulative impact since 2007 have revealed the dangers of such dependency that resulted in a serious worsening of hunger.

Undernourishment exists when caloric intake is below the minimum dietary energy requirement (MDER). The MDER is the amount of energy needed for light activity and a minimum acceptable weight for attained height. The words “hunger” and “undernourishment” are used interchangeably. (FAO)
As a result of this context, food production is generally the poor cousin of public policies in developing countries.

- The budgets devoted to agriculture are too small. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, countries that devote more than 4% of their financing to agriculture are rare.
- Agricultural policies, when they exist, favor export crops over food crops destined to feed local populations.
- They do not support the development of small-scale food production as a priority, even though small-scale food production employs an overwhelming majority of farmers in developing countries. In the poorest countries, notably in the Sahel, small-scale food providers account for up to 80% of the population.

Furthermore, farmers’ organizations in developing countries are generally ignored in the drafting of their countries’ agricultural policies and official development assistance (ODA) priorities, despite their solid knowledge of realities in the field and their representation of local populations.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that hunger is on the rise and affecting farmers. It is crucial to develop, without delay, public policies based on the principle of food sovereignty and smallholder farming support, and involve farmers’ organizations in these policies.

This is all the more necessary as the world is facing major new challenges, specifically climate change and demographic growth: the world’s population is estimated to increase from 6.7 billion to 9 billion people by 2050.

While the responses to these challenges must first be identified by developing countries, it is urgent that Europe increase its efforts so that its policies are coherent with the fight against world hunger.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO). It is silent on the provenance, control and decision making with regard to the provision of food.

Food sovereignty is a policy framework that allows communities, countries or groups of countries to establish food and agricultural policies best suited to their people without having a negative impact on the populations of other countries. “But make no mistake: food sovereignty does not mean autarky or a retreat behind borders. Nor is it opposed to international trade: all regions of the world have their own specific produce that they can trade; but food security is far too important to allow it to depend on imports. In all regions of the world, the basic food should be produced locally where possible. All regions should therefore have the right to protect themselves against low-cost imports that destroy their home production.”

Source: European Coordination Via Campesina, January 2010
Are European policies always coherent with the fight against world hunger? An analysis of agricultural, trade and development policies shows that much progress remains to be made as the European Union’s interests often take precedence over the realization of the right to food and the Millennium Development Goals.

The CAP: Both a Model and a Threat for Developing Countries

With its protection from the world market and its support for the modernization of farming, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has allowed Europe to reach its goal, namely food independence. In this way, the European model (the CAP) could be a great example for developing countries. Nevertheless, criticism is not lacking: inequitable distribution of aid between large and small farms causing the latter to disappear, promotion of production-oriented agriculture that is not environmentally-friendly, and foreign trade levels harmful to agriculture in developing countries, etc.

Subsidized European Agricultural Exports

Thanks to the 2003 reform of the CAP, export subsidies have dropped sharply. Despite this, they remain a tool to manage European agricultural crises, such as the milk crisis. While it is legitimate for the EU to support its struggling farmers, it should make sure that this support does not have negative consequences on farmers in developing countries. Yet, it did not take this precaution in January 2009 when it decided to reintroduce export refunds for milk powder.

The EU may eliminate its export subsidies after 2013. This does not, however, mean that exported foodstuffs will cease to be subsidized. A more advanced system is already replacing product aid with direct support to farmers. This is support that is said to be “decoupled” from production, and paid to farms no matter what they produce. At the end of the day, even if the exported foodstuffs no longer receive direct aid, the farms that receive subsidies can continue to sell their goods at prices below their production costs. This allows the EU to continue its dumping practices on international markets. Moreover, certain foodstuffs (wheat, dairy products, sugar) are primarily exported to the poorest countries on the planet, whose populations are mostly farmers.

Imports Sometimes Harmful to Development: The Soy Example

The EU imports 75% of its vegetable protein needs for animal feed, notably soy. In Brazil, the popularity of this crop, in the hands of large farmers, has literally chased smallholder farmers
from their land. Among other things, it causes massive deforestation. But it is incoherent in many more ways. The EU imports the soy to feed Europe’s cows. These cows produce milk, which is then also exported in the form of milk powder, for instance, and its export is directly or indirectly subsidized by European taxpayers.

For European Food Sovereignty Consistent with Development

A CAP based on the principle of food sovereignty would make it possible to preserve the interests of the vast majority of farmers in developing countries. This is also true for European farmers. One example: while food sovereignty forbids all forms of export dumping, it would allow European farmers to protect themselves from cheap imports, including in the animal feed sector. It is also a way to lessen our dependency in this field.

Global official development assistance (ODA) to the agricultural sector dropped by approximately 58% in real terms between 1980 and 2005, with its share falling from 17% to 3.8% of the total. It currently amounts to approximately 5%. (FAO, 2009.)

The European Union’s ODA for agriculture has dropped similarly. The OECD indicates that it fell from 25% in 1980 to 6% of its total ODA in 2000. In 2008, the creation of a billion-euro “facility” for agriculture in response to the food crisis was a positive shift. However, if the European Union’s cooperation policy is to be truly coherent with development, it is important that agricultural aid increase lastingly and prioritise smallholder farming, taking care to preserve the environment and involve farmers’ organizations in developing countries.

A EUROPEAN TRADE POLICY TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT?

Development is the official ultimate goal of the trade negotiations conducted in the framework of the WTO and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP). However, the EU is above all seeking to obtain greater openness of foreign markets for its companies in order to become more competitive on the world market. This is what the EU explained in its 2006 communication "Global Europe: EU Performance in the Global Economy."

The EPA negotiations are a manifestation of this strategy: the EU now demands an 80% opening of ACP country markets for European products and services in exchange for maintaining preferential access for ACP country exports to Europe. Previously, these trade preferences were granted without requesting anything in exchange.

Thus, in the agricultural field, the EU directly or indirectly subsidizes its exports to lower their prices (through CAP) while pressuring its “clients” to lower their trade protections vis-à-vis Europe (through EPA). These are policies coherent with the development of... Europe! But do they really fit the interests and expectations of most European farmers and consumers? Nothing is less certain...

GUINEA-CONAKRY:

Until 1990, Guineans consumed potatoes imported mainly from the Netherlands. Local production—limited in quantity (less than 200 tons), expensive and of mediocre quality—could not withstand the competition. Nevertheless, the Fouta Djalon Farmers’ Federation (FPFD) believed that this commodity chain had potential.

Starting in 1992, after strong mobilization, it convinced the government to block imports for five months out of the year, corresponding to the market period for local potatoes. Simultaneously, with the support of the Guinean authorities and foreign partners, the FPFD conducted a vast farmer support program to improve quality and productivity: seed and fertilizer supplies, credit, training, etc.

Result: in 1998, local production had become competitive and imports almost non-existent. The import ban was lifted but this did not prevent the commodity chain from continuing to grow and begin to export to neighboring countries. In 2007, production reached 16,000 tons, 6,000 of which were exported. Senegalese onions and Kenyan milk—to cite two products among many—provide similar examples.

Sources: studies by Coordination SUD and GRETr
Food is a right before it is a commodity.

“The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.” It deals with the ability to obtain the necessary food as well as the ability to produce it.

It is an obligation written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that, like all human rights, has greater legal value than other rules. The Declaration was strengthened by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) and clarified by FAO guidelines (2004). In 2008, a new step was taken when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. This protocol sets up a complaint system for victims of ESCR violations. It will enter into force when at least ten states have ratified it.

While citizens must make every possible effort to feed themselves, governments must comply with three types of obligations in regard to the right to food:

1. Respect it, that is to say refrain from taking measures that have the effect of hindering the right to food;
2. Protect it by ensuring that no one is deprived of this right by someone else’s actions (companies, etc.); and
3. Make it effective, that is to say take measures that allow hungry populations to feed themselves (land reform, food aid, etc.).

States’ responsibilities do not concern their citizens alone. They also have extra-territorial obligations vis-à-vis the populations of foreign countries whose access to food may be affected by the policies they implement. These obligations require the EU to make its policies coherent with the right to food of inhabitants of other countries.

ARE HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MDGS INTERCHANGEABLE?

Similarities can be seen between the right to food and the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) that aims to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015. The MDGs present the advantage of setting priorities and having numerical targets and a deadline (2015), although it is unlikely that this MDG will be achieved.

But the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stresses the technocratic nature of the MDGs, which emphasize technical and financial solutions. They barely address the power issues that are partially responsible for poverty (lack of democracy, civil society’s limited participation in the elaboration of public policies, corruption, etc.). The World Bank has noted that in many cases the obstacles to the attainment of the MDGs are political and social.

Olivier de Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, adds “It is one thing to set up policies that lean in the right direction. It is quite another to do so in a participatory manner, taking into account the situation of the most vulnerable, allowing them to help define solutions, and subjecting them to criticism by independent bodies (including judicial bodies) if the necessary measures are not taken.” The approach based on human rights believes that individuals deprived of their rights are actors and not merely recipients. They should be central to the attainment of the MDGs.

2- General Comment 12 on the ICESCR, 1999, §6.
3- General Comment 12, §15.
4- General Comment 12, §36 and 37.
5- Claiming the Millennium Development Goals: A human rights approach, 2008, pg. 4
European policy coherence for development (PCD) is a legal obligation. It is included in the European text that has the highest legal value: the Lisbon Treaty. Article 208 of the Treaty confirms the prior treaties and stipulates that: "Union development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries."

Other legal texts specify the content of the EU’s commitments. We can cite "The European Consensus on Development" in which the EU indicates that it “is important that non-development policies assist developing countries’ efforts in achieving the MDGs.”

WHAT DEVELOPMENT?
While the texts on PCD make frequent reference to the MDGs, human rights are almost never directly mentioned. It should take on a central role in the EU’s action in regard to PCD, for the reasons evoked above.

Furthermore, the EU analyzes the coherence of its policies with regard to its development cooperation policy. But is this latter policy always coherent with development? The small amount of Europe’s official development assistance devoted to smallholder farming and the free trade dogmatism guiding the EPA negotiations leave room for doubt on this point.

WHAT IMPLEMENTATION?
The EU has taken a certain number of positive initiatives to enhance PCD: the creation of a PCD unit within the European Commission, inter-service consultations, impact assessments of the EU’s principal decisions, reports published every two years since 2007, etc. Yet considerable progress remains to be made, for example:

- Set up a complaint system for the victims of European policy incoherencies and their representatives;
- Involve developing countries and their civil societies in pro-PCD actions, notably in the framework of the joint institutions established by the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP countries; and
- Consult civil society in Europe and developing countries on the principal stages of implementation, monitoring and assessment of the EU’s strategy and action plan in regard to PCD. For example, it would be useful that all actors concerned be involved in the elaboration of terms of reference, the monitoring of implementation, and the discussions on the conclusions of the impact assessments that will be produced in regard to the CAP to be implemented after 2013.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERVENE TO ENSURE THAT:
- ☑ RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS BECOMES THE PRINCIPAL REFERENCE DEFINING DEVELOPMENT,
- ☑ A COMPLAINT SYSTEM IS SET UP IN CASE OF INCOHERENCIES, AND
- ☑ ALL CONCERNED PARTIES (DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.) ARE INVOLVED IN THE EU’S PCD INITIATIVES.
Thanks to a series of institutional reforms, the Parliament has become a major actor in the EU. The European Commission cannot assume office without an approving vote by the Parliament. It elects the President of the Commission and approves the College of Commissioners. In addition, the EU budget and the trade agreements that it negotiates must be approved by the Parliament. Since the Lisbon Treaty was adopted, co-decision by Parliament and the Council has been standard legislative procedure. Because of this, for example, the European Parliament now votes on all important decisions with regard to the CAP. However, while development cooperation policy is under its jurisdiction, it does not at this time exercise any control over the budget of the European Development Fund, which is separate from the EU’s general budget. Greater coherence would recommend including the EDF in the European budget.

These growing powers imply growing responsibilities, notably with regard to PCD. Seldom active in this field until recently, the EP has had much greater involvement since the elections in June 2009, as can be seen in the Parliament’s own initiative report on PCD entrusted to MEP Franziska Keller at the end of 2009.

It is important that the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) examine more systematically whether the decisions they make are coherent with development. Elected officials have a certain number of instruments available to obtain information and ask the European Commission and Council for more precise explanations: hearings, parliamentary questions, etc. In the case of proven incoherence, the deputies may propose amendments on subjects for which the Parliament is the decision maker and propose recommendations in other subjects to make decisions coherent with development.

To make more progress, the European Parliament could also improve its internal organization. Some possibilities include creating “policy coherence for development” sub-committees, notably within committees that deal with the most sensitive subjects in regard to development (international trade, development, and agriculture and rural development); setting up a joint inter-committee on this subject made up of the three aforementioned committees; etc. In addition, each political group could designate a coordinator in charge of policy coherence so that the positions taken by the group integrate this issue. These proposals are obviously not exhaustive.

**THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: A KEY ACTOR FOR MORE COHERENT POLICIES**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

- Ensure that European policies are coherent with development in every decision that is made and every opinion that is issued by the European Parliament.
- Set up an in-house organization within Parliament and each political group to contribute to PCD.
- Publish a biennial report on the subject, including consultation of the actors concerned, among which representatives of civil society and the joint assemblies in which the European Parliament participates; and
- Demand the “budgetization” of the EDF so as to be able to exercise control over the use of funds and their coherence with reducing hunger and poverty.

8 Source: European Parliament website.
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR EUROPEAN AND ACP MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN THE JPA

✔ DESIGNATE TWO VICE-PRESIDENTS (ONE ACP MEMBER AND ONE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY MEMBER) IN CHARGE OF POLICY COHERENCE.

✔ PUBLISH A BIENNALE REPORT ON THE SUBJECT, UNDER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TWO VICE-PRESIDENTS, INCLUDING CONSULTATION OF THE ACTORS CONCERNED, AMONG WHICH ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN EUROPE AND ACP COUNTRIES.

TAKE ACTION FOR GREATER COHERENCE IN THE POLICIES OF THE ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) plays a consultative role and addresses subjects related to the development cooperation between the European Union and ACP states in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. It is made up of 78 ACP representatives (one for each state in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) and 78 members of the European Parliament selected proportionally to the number of elected officials from each political group. It meets twice a year, alternately in an ACP country and the European Union. The JPA has three standing committees:

- political affairs; economic development, finance and trade; and social affairs and the environment.

The Cotonou Agreement recognizes the roles of ACP states in promoting PCD. Article 12 stipulates that “where the Community intends, in the exercise of its powers, to take a measure which might affect the interests of the ACP States, […] it shall inform in good time the said States of its intentions.” A mechanism to consult ACP states is provided for and they may “submit suggestions for amendments indicating the way their concerns should be met.” Yet, this article has been little applied to date. As for the JPA, while it has addressed policy coherence in some of the texts it has adopted, its contributions remain small with regard to the interests of ACP countries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PCD


• CONCORD (the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development), including the “Spotlight on Policy Coherence” report published in English (October 2009) and French (March 2010). www.concordeurope.org

• Evert Vermeer Stichting, initiator of the “Fair Politics EU” program to promote PCD. Case studies, analyses, etc. available at www.fairpolitics.eu


• European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/policy_coherence_en.cfm
The ‘ALIMENTERRE’ program aims to raise awareness among political leaders and the European public on the causes of world hunger and the means to fight it. For 2010-2012, it seeks primarily to promote policies and individual behaviors coherent with developing country populations’ right to food. The ALIMENTERRE program is coordinated by CFSI (France) in partnership with PKE and PZS (Poland). It brings together the European network EUROSTEP as well as Evert Vermeer Stichting (Netherlands), COSPE and Terra Nuova (Italy), Germanwatch (Germany), SOS Hunger (Belgium and Luxembourg), and PAH (Poland).