

# International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD)



## Fact Sheet



# Food for Life

### Introduction

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report was a result of a four-year consultative process (2004-2007) by governments, civil society, academics, private sector actors and policy makers around the world. The purpose of the consultation was to assess agricultural knowledge, science and technology and analyze the extent to which they can meet the goals of reducing hunger and poverty, improving nutrition, health and rural livelihoods, and facilitating social and environmental sustainability.

The IAASTD report identifies three 'bottom lines' in agriculture – economic, social and environmental. Industrial agriculture has been successful only with regard to the economic bottom line, but it has caused social and environmental problems. The IAASTD report points instead towards a model of agriculture that takes into account all three bottom lines.

The report clearly shows that "business as usual is not an option", and that commercial agricultural practices are endangering the planet while also failing to substantially reduce the number of people living in hunger. To reverse this trend, the report proposes investments in ecological practices and science that encourage participatory knowledge creation and the integration of indigenous knowledge. It also asks what agriculture would look like if it was to deliver social and environmental benefits as well as economic returns.

However, despite the broad participation in the IAASTD process, and its far-reaching findings, the report has received little attention from governments, despite the fact that most governments formally endorsed the final conclusions. Thus it falls to civil society – including the churches – to promote the findings of this valuable report. The fundamental bottom line is that almost one billion people in the world are hungry and malnourished. The injustice of food insecurity is not the result of lack of cultivable and productive land. It is rather a result of almost exclusively profit-driven, unjust and ultimately unsustainable systems for producing, marketing, distributing and consuming food.

The IAASTD project developed out of consultative process involving 100 countries and more than 400 experts. It was launched as an intergovernmental process, under the co-sponsorship of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the Global Environment Fund (GEF); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO).



## Objectives

IAASTD was aimed at addressing how agricultural knowledge, science and technology can be improved:

- to reduce hunger and poverty and assure rural livelihoods
- to improve health and nutrition
- to promote equitable and socially, environmentally and sustainable development

## Legal status

The IAASTD report is not legally binding on member states. However, the report provides guidelines and options for governments and donors that they can undertake to cope with present and future agricultural production challenges.



## Process

IAASTD was initiated during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development by the World Bank and FAO. The IAASTD reports are the result of six years of consultations, research and writing by a diverse stakeholder group with representatives from international development agencies, governments, civil society, policy makers, scientists and the private sector from around the world.

The global summary for decision-makers was approved on 7-12 April, 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa by the Intergovernmental Plenary Meeting. The report was accepted by the following 58 countries:

Armenia	Gambia	Poland
Azerbaijan	Ghana	Palau
Bahrain	Honduras	Romania
Bangladesh	India	Saudi Arabia
Belize	Iran	Senegal
Benin	Ireland	Solomon Islands
Bhutan	Kenya	Swaziland
Botswana	Kyrgyzstan	Sweden
Brazil	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Switzerland
Cameroon	Lebanon	United Republic of Tanzania
People's Republic of China	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Timor-Leste
Costa Rica	Maldives	Togo
Cuba	Moldova	Tunisia
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mozambique	Turkey
Dominican Republic	Namibia	Uganda
El Salvador	Nigeria	United Kingdom
Ethiopia	Pakistan	Uruguay
Finland	Panama	Viet Nam
France	Paraguay	Zambia
	Philippines	

*In addition, 3 countries (United States, Canada and Australia) recognized the value of IAASTD but did not fully approve the report.*



*"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."  
- Genesis 2:15*

## Summary of IAASTD findings

**A** Food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, and poverty reduction cannot be achieved by a "business as usual" approach. There is no single model of agriculture that will solve all our food security problems. There is a need to appreciate that agriculture operates within complex systems and is multifunctional in its nature.

**B** The chains of food production and consumption have to ensure environmental protection. This entails the need to ensure that the process does not result in land abandonment, deforestation or the displacement of poor smallholder farmers into marginal land.

**C** Global hunger and poverty cannot be solved without an approach that has smallholder farmers and gender equality at its core. It is now recognized that more than half of the world's agriculture depends on women, and that when their access to resources is increased, food production, too, increases. Food security can also be promoted by strengthening farmers' organizations, small-scale producers and traditional knowledge systems; increasing investments in infrastructure development; facilitating access to markets and trade opportunities; occupational education and extension services; access to capital, credit, insurance; and ensuring access to natural resources such as land and water.

**D** Trade liberalization has driven countries to open markets to international competition too quickly before basic institutions are in place, undermining their rural sector. The dumping of cheap subsidized food from developed countries into developing countries displaces local food production, leaving rural communities and nations vulnerable to global food price and supply volatility, and eroding their food and livelihood security.

**E** Converging crises of climate change, energy and water scarcity, and conflicts over land use and land rights and other economic and environmental stresses will negatively impact food production. These crises need to be addressed in ways that recognize farmers' rights, rebalance power in the food system and protect biodiversity and the ecosystem.

## Agriculture at a crossroads: What needs to be done?

The challenge to ensure food security is to find the approaches that will equitably deliver sufficient and healthy diets in ways that promote sustainable development. The following are some of the recommendations from the IAASTD report:

**1** We need a global shift away from industrial agricultural practices having high social, economic and cultural costs. More emphasis should be put on solutions that will deliver productivity on the basis of:

- ecological approaches including organic agriculture that alleviate poverty and improve food security.
- reduced and efficient water use.
- reduced fossil fuel use in energy, fertilisers, pest and disease management.
- conservation technologies, soil conservation measures and reduction of water pollution.
- increased ecological resilience and capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and other environmental stresses.

**2** We must recognize that food security in most developing countries is best served by placing productivity and profitability of small-scale farmers and women at the heart of development policy. To support these farmers there is need to:

- involve farmers in the governance of research and development.
- reduce fossil fuel use in agriculture (for fertilisers, pesticides and equipment).
- revise laws of ownership and access, and protect farmers' rights to save, use, reuse, exchange and multiply seeds.
- focus investment on local priorities identified through participatory and transparent processes. These should favour diverse solutions to local problems rather than adopting a "one size fits all" approach of using genetically engineered crops as a solution.
- guide and regulate the private sector to ensure its contributions promote equity and sustainability.
- establish equitable regional and global trade arrangements that enable farmers to meet food and livelihood security goals and diversify production.
- invest in developing national and regional food markets and reserves.

## EAA perspectives on the IAASTD report

The EAA Food for Life Campaign supports and promotes:

- Agro-ecological approaches to farming that respect ecological diversity and with which farmers can attain sustainable food security and minimize their dependency on handouts and food aid;
- Farmers' right to save their own open-pollinated seed varieties rather than having to purchase expensive hybrid or genetically modified seed each year;
- Best use of local farmers' resources and knowledge to improve the well-being of their own communities;
- Valuing smallholder agriculture as a viable, dignified and sustainable lifestyle; and
- Reducing dependency on expensive and ecologically-damaging agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The EAA believes that the IAASTD report identifies policy options that are consistent with the these policy objectives, that will help meet Millennium Development Goal #1 (reducing hunger by half by 2015), and that will contribute towards the fulfillment of the human right to food.

The EAA therefore seeks to undertake the following actions:

- raise awareness of the key findings of IAASTD
- call on governments to adopt the preferred policy options of IAASTD
- call for responses to food crises to be based on human rights principles and on the findings of IAASTD

We believe that EAA members and partners will be inspired by the report, and find it useful for lobbying governments to adopt sustainable agro-ecological approaches to agriculture and establish policies and institutions that support small-scale farmers, advance social equity and foster biodiverse, ecologically resilient farming. EAA therefore commends the IAASTD report to its members and partners.

## For more detailed information on IAASTD please refer to

International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), Synthesis Report, 2009:

<http://www.agassessment.org/> (Official UN site)

<http://www.agassessment-watch.org> (an NGO site accompanying the follow-up process to this report)

Agriculture at a Crossroads: Food for Survival. 2009. Greenpeace Report.

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/reports/agriculture-at-a-crossroads-report/>

Agriculture in the Context of Global Food Security: Synopsis of Seven Recent International Documents on Rural Development Strategies, German NGO Forum on Environment and Development, 2009:

[http://www.forum-ue.de/fileadmin/userupload/publikationen/le\\_2009\\_synopse\\_engl.pdf](http://www.forum-ue.de/fileadmin/userupload/publikationen/le_2009_synopse_engl.pdf)

IAASTD Reports: Key issues in relation to food and nutrition security, Paper presented at the Brussels Rural Development Briefing on Food Security, Dec 9, 2009 by Hans R. Herren, Co-Chair IAASTD, President Millennium Institute:

<http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/food/>

Ishii-Eiteman, M. Food Sovereignty and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development. P. 689-700 in Patel, Raj (Guest Editor) Grassroots Voices Special Section: 'Food sovereignty', Journal of Peasant Studies, 36:3, July 2009, 663-706.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smp/section?content=a916395808&fulltext=713240928>

What IAASTD tells us: Rudolf Buntzel, Church Development Service (EED) & Bernhard Walter, Brot für die Welt. A fact sheet available in English, German, French and Spanish.

<http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/food/sustainable-production/>

"How we produce food, how we distribute it and how we ensure that all people have access to culturally-appropriate nourishment is a fundamental matter of justice towards people, the Creation of God. 'Give us this day our daily bread' is a petition repeated by millions of Christians around the world as they pray the Lords' Prayer. This Prayer calls us to care for humanity and all creation and ensure a just, peaceful and sustainable world.'

- Excerpt from EAA Food for Life Campaign Framework for Action, 2009-2012



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