



Monsieur le Président de la République
Palais de l'Elysée
55, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré
75008 Paris

Geneva, 1 November 2011

Your Excellency,

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) – a network of 80 churches and related organizations around the world – would like to express our great appreciation that food security has been made a priority during France's presidency of the G20. We share your concern about food price volatility and the need for greater investment in agriculture as two urgent challenges for reducing hunger around the world.

The G20 summit on 3-4 November in Cannes marks a critical opportunity to agree on solutions to these pressing issues and to feed the outcomes of these deliberations into the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the most inclusive intergovernmental forum for discussion, governance and ensuring coherence in agriculture and food policies.

To take full advantage of this opportunity, we urge the French government to show leadership on the following key issues and recommendations that EAA members have highlighted in their advocacy:

Support countries' ability to feed themselves through strategies based on the Right to Food

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, hunger is neither the result of demographic problems nor just the result of a mismatch between supply and demand. It is primarily the result of political factors that condemn small-scale food producers, the primary victims of hunger, to poverty. These factors include insufficient access to land, water and credit; poor organization of local markets; lack of infrastructure; lack of bargaining power against intermediaries and an increasingly concentrated agro-industrial sector. Approaches based on the right to food seek to address these fundamental issues.

We urge governments to strengthen their efforts to promote a participatory, transparent, and inclusive process that incorporates civil society organizations and smallholder farmers' and food producers' associations in the development of food and nutrition security policies and country plans. This process should extend to the development, implementation and evaluation of the country proposals and should guarantee that countries have the policy space required to define their own food security strategies.

Boost investments in sustainable smallholder food production systems

Developing countries need increased investment in smallholder food production systems - including farmers/fisherfolk/pastoralists and their associations and movements. Investment is especially needed to improve sustainable productivity, to provide better access to markets, to establish storage facilities to reduce post-

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harvest losses and waste, and to improve infrastructure for food processing and preservation, as well as for transportation. At the same time, investment strategies must support farmers' organizations and farmers' rights, protect access to land and agricultural services, and boost employment in the agricultural sector. It is vital that land that is critical for food production and for ensuring food security is not diverted for other uses.

Agro-ecological production systems as promoted in the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report should be the foundation of agricultural policies and should be supported by further research and extension.

Limit financial speculation in agricultural produce and reinforce strategic food reserves

Food price volatility is most harmful to poor people who spend the greatest proportion of their income on food. Such volatility also makes it difficult to plan production or investment and to mitigate the risks of loss of livelihoods. Secure and predictable access to food, particularly during shocks, is essential to stability and to economic growth and development. Physical food reserves appropriately managed and stocked by local procurement whenever possible, can play a vital role in helping vulnerable nations better manage risk and volatility and respond faster and more cost-effectively to urgent food needs.

At the same time, tighter regulation of financial speculation in food staples is urgently required.

The current system, which has increasingly allowed excessive speculation to occur, needs to be redefined to address concerns related to social equity and the environment. Contemporary commercial rules tend to re-affirm the vulnerabilities of developing countries. Subsidies for agrofuel production, for example, should be eliminated and a greater focus placed on the human rights approach to food security.

Improve international cooperation on agriculture and food policies

Achieving food security requires countries to work together especially in times of food crisis. The essential mechanism in this regard is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the most inclusive intergovernmental forum for discussions on agriculture and food policy, which is mandated to ensure coherence. We strongly support the reforms of the CFS – including the improved participation of civil society through the Civil Society Mechanism – and welcome the opportunity that the reformed system affords for establishing an effective, democratic and legitimate system of global food governance.

We believe these issues are fundamental to achieving sustainable food security, and require the immediate and ongoing commitment of G20 governments. It will take the combined leadership of the G20, in partnership with the governments of the developing world, to put the global food system on a sustainable footing.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peter N. Prove', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter N. Prove
Executive Director