

Focus :

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

CONFERENCE

[GE7]

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# HOW TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

## MAIN FINDINGS

Food security must be placed at the heart of development policies. Intervention at all levels is needed and both the structural and indirect causes of food insecurity must be tackled. Greater linkages should be established between urgent situations and medium or long term priorities. The aim is not simply to produce more but to produce differently, by creating a form of agriculture which is sustainable and diversified. Companies have the capacity to develop agri-food production and to offer products of greater nutritional quality to local populations. To achieve this, the rule of law is necessary, since this will allow businesses to make secure investments and to remain competitive. Finally, ensuring food security means that a participatory approach is needed, that includes communities and local governments to an equal degree.

## SPEAKERS

**Frédéric Apollin**

Executive Director, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans  
Frontières

**Jean-François Lamoureux**

Member of the Board, Action Contre la Faim

**Adeline Lescanne-Gautier**

Executive Director, Nutriset

**Mansour Ndiaye**

Economic Advisor, PNUD Niger

**Alexandre Vilgrain**

Chairman and CEO, SOMDIAA

## MODERATOR

**Philippe Ryfman**

Professor and Associate Researcher, Panthéon-  
Sorbonne University

## SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

### Achieving food security in Niger

**Mansour Ndiaye** explains that UNDP's actions in Niger consist of reflecting upon an approach which provides responses to structural problems which are weighing down on food security. As a matter of fact, Niger has large amounts of natural resources but is forced to face recurring food crises. A radical change in policies and strategies is therefore needed. The MDG Acceleration Framework has put in place a number of coordinated interventions which aim to create partnerships and synergies. Food security should actually be placed at the heart of development policies and short, medium and long term interventions should be better linked together, and this is especially the case in a country in which the need for intervention is so severe. In order to attain food security, four levers have to be put to work. Firstly, agricultural production has to be improved in a context in which there is a lack of agricultural input and restricted access to water, agricultural technology and produce. Secondly, community resilience must be strengthened by setting up social safety nets for the most vulnerable households, some of which suffer from chronic food insecurity. Thirdly, women should be encouraged to be autonomous since improving their access to resources correlates with improved food security for the entire household. Fourthly, a participatory approach should be taken, bringing together the central state, producers, universities, research centres and NGOs. This last point is fundamental in obtaining a broad overview of the problem as a whole, thus avoiding a doubling up of efforts. It is in this framework that the 3N initiative took root, that of 'Nigeriens feeding Nigeriens', launched by the Head of State.

### Strategies for local nutritional autonomy

**Adeline Lescanne-Gautier** explains that Nutriset is a company that was created in France in 1986 in order to develop and produce specific nutritional solutions for fighting malnutrition. This family SME is today the world leader and works exclusively in the humanitarian sector, such as with NGOs and UN agencies that distribute its products, notably among children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Nutriset has developed a strong research department and collaborates with more than sixty scientific

programmes around the world in order to develop and test products in the field. The factory manufactures between 100 and 150 tonnes of products a day, which are solely produced for export. Nutriset intervenes in urgent humanitarian crises or by supporting actions to prevent moderate malnutrition. The range of Nutriset products are targeted towards their different recipients. Among those aimed towards prevention, there are products for children during their first 1000 days, others for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers, as well as those that are complements for children from the age of 6 months onwards. These products are necessary for people who are malnourished and who do not have access to food in sufficient quantities and sufficiently diversified in nutritional quality. Other products are aimed at treating acute, moderate and severe malnutrition, which affects 5 million children. The products are not sold to the beneficiaries, but rather distributed in the form of aid by the United Nations, NGOs and local health ministries. At the moment, Nutriset intends to allow for the manufacturing of these products to take place in the countries affected by malnutrition. This is why Nutriset has set up the PlumpyField Network, a network of independent local producers which currently number ten across Africa, India and Central America. In this way, quality products which have been approved by international organisations can be produced for NGOs, UNICEF or the WFP in order for them to be distributed among malnourished children in these countries. This is an original development lever which serves nutritional autonomy in the region. It is a source of job creation and creates added value for local agricultural networks.

### Evolving towards agroecological production

**Frédéric Apollin** highlights the fact that the challenge does not solely lie in producing and exchanging more but also in producing, processing and selling produce in a 'better' way, without applying the European-style intensive agriculture model. The aim is to produce differently and to move towards agro-ecological production which is intensive in labour and which respects the environment. Rethinking selling methods in order to make them more locally focused on territories, towns and rural areas will reduce the dependence of certain states on international markets and price volatility whilst also creating local jobs in upstream and downstream production services. Finally, small-scale farming should be supported: 70% of the world's

food is produced on 500 million small-scale farms, whereas only 20 to 30 million holdings resort to conventional agriculture on farms over 10 hectares in size. Therefore, food security will not be achieved without small-scale farming being taken into account. Four conditions are needed in order to reach these objectives. Firstly, land and water access for small-scale producers should be secured and defended since today it is under threat from land grabbing and a lack of certainty in legal frameworks. Fair and transparent access to markets is also necessary, both by promoting short supply chains and by improving the protection of regional markets. Thirdly, huge reinvestment in small-scale farming, which has long been neglected, must take place (infrastructure, services, research, technical assistance, etc.). In addition to this, agricultural councils adapted to agroecology should be developed, for agriculture but also for cattle breeding, a sector which should not be forgotten about. Finally, one vital condition is that professional farmer organisations should be strengthened. This is necessary in order to achieve an even balance of power in the sectors that trade products and in order to provide greater long-term security for the agricultural sector by putting in place incentives such as subsidies for young farmers.

### Tackling the indirect causes of food insecurity

**Jean-François Lamoureux** points out that when considering the notion of a territory, this word can conjure up images of anything from a traditional province or a geographical area to an administrative region. Food security is defined as access to healthy food, of sufficient quality and in sufficient quantity while taking into account food preferences. This therefore also requires political, economic and environmental security. It is not simply about giving someone something to eat. Rather, intervention has to take place at all levels: food quality, buying power, maternal care, etc. The indirect causes of food insecurity must be tackled, or in other words, extreme poverty must be reduced. In this context, ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTFs) are one element of intervention but are not to be labelled as a tool for food security. In order to achieve food security, programmes in which people are paid for their labour can be set up at the outbreak of an emergency in order to get the small local economy going again. Relaunching agriculture involves contributions of input, equipment and support for cattle breeding. Disaster risk prevention also allows for resilience. Therefore

interventions should be focused on the long-term and not simply on emergencies as they arise. One example of this approach is the cereal bank system, whereby farmers group together to buy cereal at the time of harvest, meaning that they pay low prices, helping them to survive later when the going gets tough.

### Favouring local production

**Alexandre Vilgrain** explains that SOMDIAA is a business which has historically been implanted in the African continent thanks to its local branches which intervene in the sectors of sugar, flour and animal feed. Its four main areas of expertise are agriculture, cattle breeding, processing and distribution. Nowadays, the company's entire turnover comes from and is returned to local African markets. In order to ensure food independence, production at an industrial level must be made possible. This requires the rule of law in order to ensure secure investments and in order to remain competitive. There must be an interest in selling a product locally and protecting commercial networks. Finally, given that accumulating capital is necessary for agricultural production (a plough, livestock) and its enhancement (storage facilities, a mill), the model of cooperatives and encouraging complementarity between large private farms and small-scale farmers can be highlighted as effective solutions. In order to tackle urgent demographic growth, Africa must become independent in its agriculture in order to ensure its own food security.

## SUMMARY OF AUDIENCE EXCHANGE

### What role can farmer organisations play?

**Mansour Ndiaye** answers that in the case of the MDG Acceleration Framework, farmer organisations play a key role, since they are linked to the participatory process. From the point of view of public policy, there have also been significant changes, since policy of this type is no longer put together by development partners but is rather led nowadays by national authorities. The United Nations contributes with its expertise by supporting the vision of each state. What is more, the 3N initiative was initiated by the President.

### Is it more beneficial to have one shared factory which exports or a factory in each country?

**Adeline Lescanne-Gautier** explains that the first option is more satisfactory given that it means that there is more investment and training is more focused on the long-term. For products in the PlumpyNut range, the

formula is the same everywhere because all children have the same needs. As for products aimed at prevention, work is carried out alongside local universities in order to develop and adapt the products to local conditions and tastes. Production is relocated in order to enhance local production in the countries where it is most needed.

#### REPORTER

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### MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- *Glossary of Food Sovereignty Convergences 2015 [in French]:* [www.convergences2015.org/fr/Article?id=598](http://www.convergences2015.org/fr/Article?id=598)
- *The Hunger Barometer 2012 Convergences 2015 [in French]:* [www.convergences2015.org/fr/Article?id=681](http://www.convergences2015.org/fr/Article?id=681)
- Daniel Nahon (2012). *Sauvons l'agriculture !*, Odile Jacob.