



Federal Ministry  
of Food  
and Agriculture

# BMEL-Concept for Global Food Security and Nutrition

Agri-food policies: key to achieving the human right to adequate food



# Foreword

Dear Reader



At a time when more than half of the global population are suffering from hunger, malnutrition or are affected by overweight and obesity, we need concepts which focus on the complex causes of these problems and develop solutions accordingly.

The agri-food system is crucial to global food security and nutrition as well as to sustainable development. Sufficient quantities of quality food are necessary for child growth, learning, physical work, pregnancy, breast-feeding and for recovery from and resistance to disease. It is vital to have knowledge about healthy diet and to follow a healthy lifestyle. As the ministry in Germany's Federal Government that holds the portfolio for agri-food and nutrition issues, the BMEL is very aware of its special responsibility and takes action to promote sustainability in agriculture and food systems at national, European and international level.

The aim is no longer just to eradicate hunger in the world; the goal is now to reduce and prevent all forms of malnutrition. To achieve this goal, we need to free ourselves from thinking within certain sectors, for instance focussing only on the agricultural or the health sector. We will also not be able to meet these challenges with national strategies alone. We need to work together with partners from politics, industry, civil society and academia, engaging in strong, sustainable cooperation that extends beyond national borders and beyond continents.

The key focus is on achieving the human right to adequate food. Every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, must have the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. To achieve this right, we must make the agri-food system sensitive to nutrition and food safety. We must create opportunities to earn income in rural areas by making supply chains efficient and sustainable. This requires sustainable and responsible investment, particularly in developing countries.

We wish to assist these processes. This concept outlines our fundamental principles and goals. It represents the guiding vision for my ministry's European and international policies.

I hope you find it an interesting and stimulating read. Because it is up to each and every one of us to make the vision of a world in which everybody can have adequate, sufficient and healthy food come true.

**Christian Schmidt, Member of the German Bundestag**  
Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

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## Current situation and challenges

Global agriculture has for decades succeeded in feeding an additional 80 million people each year. The average number of people suffering from hunger has therefore declined despite the fact that the global population has increased. In purely mathematical terms, there is currently even enough food to feed everyone in the world. And yet each year a gap remains: more than 800 million people are starving; approximately two billion more are suffering from micronutrient deficiencies – so-called “hidden hunger”.

And the future will bring even greater challenges for global food security and nutrition:

- a global population of over nine billion people by 2050;
- a rising demand for energy and other products from renewable resources;
- a rising demand for food of animal origin;
- a growing number of overweight people; and
- the consequences of climate change.

To safeguard the future of humankind, agriculture and food systems must be made more sustainable and must sustainably use, preserve and conserve natural resources such as soil, water and biodiversity. To this end the agri-food system requires a secure policy environment in which all states fulfil their responsibilities to their respective populations and take concerted action at international and regional level. Agricultural and food policies can therefore help lay the foundation for long-term security and stability worldwide – for ultimately, food policy is also security policy.

## The role of the BMEL

Achieving the human right to adequate food, and building a future where every individual worldwide has an adequate nutritional status, requires the interplay of many sectors and stakeholders, including the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).

The BMEL holds the portfolio within Germany's Federal Government for **food, agriculture and consumer health protection**.

The agri-food system's importance for food security and good nutrition gives rise to the BMEL's special responsibility to promote sustainable agriculture and sustainable food systems worldwide, to support exchange between academia, civil society and industry and, in collaboration with other ministries, to take action to improve global food security and nutrition.

The BMEL's agri-food policies aim to create an environment that is conducive to varied and affordable foods in adequate quality and quantity being made available.

The BMEL's agricultural policy is also designed to help reduce poverty, especially in rural areas, and promote adequate nutrition for everyone.



## The BMEL's tools and objectives

The BMEL's overarching goal is to help achieve the **human right to adequate food** in Germany, Europe and the world. The human right to food will be achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic **access to sufficient, safe and adequate food** that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

This gives rise to further goals for the BMEL:

- create a suitable environment for food security and nutrition;
- improve food security and nutrition worldwide, and sustainably increase production and productivity in the agri-food system;
- make agriculture and food systems sensitive to nutrition and food safety;
- develop long-term strategies for the sustainable use of resources and provide targeted support for research.



The BMEL has a number of tools to help achieve these goals and overcome adverse circumstances to permanently close the gap in supply on the ground:

For instance, BMEL employs its expertise and experience in food and agriculture and, as lead ministry for these fields, supports the work of the United Nations, especially the UN's **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and **Committee for World Food Security (CFS)**.

The Federal Republic of Germany is the third largest contributor to the FAO; represented by the BMEL. Germany supports the FAO's work and backs an expansion of the FAO's core competences, namely the creation of an international policy-enabling environment, the setting of standards and the provision of policy advice.

The BMEL also cooperates with the FAO under the **Bilateral Trust Fund (BTF)**, supporting pilot projects designed to promote food security and nutrition. These projects are conducted in selected partner countries and develop strategies to improve the food and nutrition situation based on the human right to adequate food.

Another of the BMEL's tools is the **Bilateral Cooperation Programme (BKP)**, which it uses to support partner countries in establishing productive and resource-efficient agriculture and food systems. The projects target countries with high agricultural potential in order to make an optimal contribution towards ensuring the supply of food, both locally and worldwide. The focus is on political exchange, legislative advice and the transfer of technology and knowledge. Educational facilities, associations, research facilities and companies from the agri-food system are involved in the projects and contribute their expertise, while industry, in particular, also contributes benefits in kind.

The BMEL also uses **bilateral and multilateral exchanges** to help lay the foundation for making agriculture and food systems sustainable and market-oriented and for establishing the primacy of food security and nutrition.

Additionally, the BMEL conducts **departmental research**, allowing it to contribute towards important issues of global food security and nutrition; it also supports the establishment of **research partnerships** on these issues between domestic agri-food research facilities and those in partner countries.

## Possible solutions

Food security and nutrition is an area where there are many conflicting interests, for instance regarding production, trade, health protection and the preservation and sustainable use of resources. This in turn results in conflicting aims which need to be resolved with careful consideration. BMEL sets the following priorities in this regard:

### Create a suitable environment for food security and nutrition

1. The BMEL supports the adoption of international norms and guidelines in order to entrench food security and nutrition as a political priority worldwide.

Sustainable food security and nutrition will only become a reality if we realise and implement democracy, the principles of good governance, the rule of law, the protection and fulfilment of human rights, and the freedom from discrimination, and if governments are accountable to their citizens for their actions.

The international community has adopted **international norms and guidelines** within the United Nations and at regional level that act as a point of reference for governmental action in the field of food security and nutrition. These include the human right to food, the human right to water and sanitation, and the voluntary guidelines on the right to food.

Public and private investment in agriculture is urgently needed in developing countries and emerging economies. To ensure that this investment also benefits those suffering from hunger and malnutrition – i. e. that it sustainably boosts agricultural production, generates income and jobs, and empowers rural areas – the investment must be responsible, sustainable and in line with national strategies on