Position Statement

on

"World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy"

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) is aware that the main objective of the FAO is to guarantee that all people have access at all times to the food needed to lead healthy and active lives. IFHE is also cognizant that among other activities, FAO support national and trans-national activities in areas of household and food security, food and nutritional education, food and nutritional surveillance, standardisation and food control, and about food composition.

The International Federation for Home Economics is an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) having consultative relationship with ECOSOC of the United Nations which works in close co-operation with the UN Specialized Agencies, FAO, WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF, as well with the Council of Europe.

The members of the IFHE are drawn from academia, community based occupations and corporate consumer services, hospitality and service-based organisations. The professionals associated with the IFHE focus on the fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and family in everyday life and their importance both at the individual and at community levels. It is also concerned with the issues impacting individuals and families at the societal and global levels so that their wellbeing can be enhanced in an ever changing and ever challenging environment.

The IFHE influences individuals, families, communities and policy makers through research publications, pedagogy and advocacy. IFHE collaborates with allied groups and organisations in serving the needs of individuals and families in meeting its core objectives.

The IFHE is concerned about the recent developments in the World food crises resulting in civil unrest in several countries, the escalating price of basic food items which threaten Food Security in poor countries and impacting vulnerable groups like
women, children, rural and urban poor. The issues that impact this rapidly increasing cost of basic foods are many and each multidimensional.

In some parts of the world, the crisis is reported to be caused by poor distribution of food rather than inadequate production. Yet in most other parts issues revolve around climate changes and the resulting impact on agriculture and land usage that cause the decrease in food production and the loss of livelihood for poor rural farmers. The phenomenon is also impacted by bio-energy activities and the diversion of agricultural resources into the production of alternate energy sources for fuel, electricity and transportation.

IFHE supports the notion that the crises is sufficiently threatening globally that a High-Level Conference that focus on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy of the FAO is timely and looks forward to the outcome of these deliberations.

**World Food Security:**
The impact of the current World Food Security Crises is reflected in the noticeably reduced availability and the increasing high prices of basic foods around the world. The reasons are many and varied and the result of developmental activities and trends globally. One reason is noted to be associated with the demands of a few “high-population” lesser developed countries (LDC) with increasing demands on world food supply. This increase is caused by the improved per capita income, change in dietary habits and population growth in those countries and their ability to trade more aggressively with non food commodities for their food needs on the world market. It appears that there has not been sufficient adjustment in the world food production volumes to meeting this type of demand.

It is further reported by international experts that there is a reduction in Food Aid from developed countries despite the increasing need for food in light of the Millennium Development Goal, “to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger “, and the pervasiveness of civil and cross border conflicts which create massive dislocation of people in Africa and the Middle East.

International trade policies that do not support local subsidies for poor rural farmers in developing countries are also identified as a major contributing factor impacting the most vulnerable groups in the LDC including children, women, rural people and urban poor. Policies that ensure that food security as a priority on national agendas especially in the LDC, and that promote equity fairness in world trade and balance of payments must be part of the solution to this crisis.
Challenges to Climate Change:
Climatic changes impacted by environmental conditions exacerbated by technological thrusts, environmental degradation continue to impact food production, world prices and distribution. Compounded by growing populations and the adaptation of environmentally unfriendly developmental activities and consumption choices, many developed countries continue to harvest the bulk and richer portions of the world's food resources. Denuded by long histories of poor environmental conditions for healthy agriculture and the absence of appropriate technology to facilitate the sustainability self-sufficiency in basic food supply, LDC in vulnerable parts of the world are more acutely affected by the current world food crises. Between 2000 and 2004 around 262 million people were affected by climate disasters. Of these 98% lived in developing countries. By 2020 between 75 and 250 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to have less water. In areas where agriculture is dependent on rainfall, yields could drop by 50 percent. Many livestock breeds cannot be genetically improved fast enough to adapt to climate change.

Many of the every day practices that impact global warming for example, carbon emissions, high fuel consumption, environmentally unfriendly manufacturing and consumption practices, are more pronounced in the developed countries yet impact the LDC more profoundly.

Bio-energy:
The search for alternative to carbon-based fuel is desirable, but when this search leads to the destabilization of societies because of the reduction and diversion of healthy food supply then that search becomes distorted.

Most of the crops associated with bio-fuel production have been traditionally used as food. The increased diversion of food crops into bio-fuel production will continue exacerbate the food crises and disenfranchise rural people in LDC unless small farmers can be enabled to meet their own fuel needs for equipment and electricity, if they are incorporated in the bio-fuel chain and appropriate environmental management systems are put in place.

The IFHE encourages more research in non-threatening ways to the quality of life for all people. Research in Solar Energy with the active participation of developed and lesser developed countries in active partnership for shared technology, and involving private and public sectors is one alternative that UN organisations like the FAO could facilitate for incremental application of crises free results.
Role of FAO:
The IFHE encourages the United Nations through its related groups like the FAO to continue its role as clearinghouse for technical, data sharing, multilateral discussions that seek to identify solutions for the concerns and challenges impacting food security and treat this crises with urgency at all levels.

IFHE encourages the FAO to promote immediate actions and policies that will remove the risk of starvation from individuals, families and communities by providing the guidelines for all countries to make Food Security a priority on national agendas.

IFHE encourages the FAO to prompt developed countries to increase Food Aid to LDC that are most impacted by the crises especially where families and children are dispossessed by drought, conflict, natural disasters and high balance of payment in response to national debts.

IFHE encourages the FAO to seek to declare that international trade policies be relaxed to support poor rural farmers in LDC in respect of the means for production, fertilisers, seeds, technology, roads and water for producing basic and nutritious food crops to meet the needs of local populations.

IFHE Commitments:
The International Federation for Home Economics supports the United Nations initiatives through its individual and organisation members globally, and acting at local levels in the over 50 countries represented by its members, and in collaboration with other non-governmental organisations and civil societies is committed to:

- Eradicating hunger and extreme poverty actively participating achieving World Food Summit and Millennium Developmental Goals.

- Becoming more informed about the issues surrounding the world food security crises, bio-energy research, production and its impact on the cost and availability of food, the impact of climate change on the agricultural activities and the availability of food especially to poor countries and the impact of these issues on the everyday lives of individuals and families.

- Pursuing educational activities through community based projects, academic research and curriculum instruction focusing on appropriate actions to mitigate the impact of world food markets on the poor.

- Advancing the idea that poor farmers around the world can be facilitated to access markets and encourage their improved productivity to improve personal income and food circulation through the adoption of trade policies that are sympathetic to their needs and that this be part of the solution to the growing food crises.
• Educating and the re-educating of the media, community based groups and NGOs regarding:
  o the nutritional quality of traditional and emerging foods;
  o the multiple issues and factors impacting the production, availability and access to adequate food supply and the culture related solutions that will meet the needs for improved and sustained quality of life for individuals, families in communities in various cultural settings around the world;
  o food management principles that are appropriate for households and families.

• Including food security; climate changes and the impact on food production and food availability; the issues impacting the emergence of bio-energy production utilising traditional food sources and agricultural resources in primary, secondary and post secondary school curriculum.

• Promoting family gardens, school gardens and community gardens as first steps in buffeting the impact of scarcity and rising food prices for vegetables and to improve food and nutrition education and self reliance.

• Promoting healthy food choices and create ways of preparing and serving local foods that eliminate hunger and nutritional deficiency illnesses especially women, children and the aged.

• Promoting greater consumer awareness among citizens, entrepreneurs and policymakers for seeking local solutions to soaring food prices that are pulling many families into poverty.

• Collaborating with other NGOs in advocating for the increased financial support for the most vulnerable citizens of the world inclusive of women, children, the aged, rural and urban poor, through national, world trade and trans-national aid policies.

• Continuously monitor the global developments in respect of the World food crises and encourage groups within the IFHE to systematically share project results and best practices at meetings and conferences.

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On Behalf of
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