

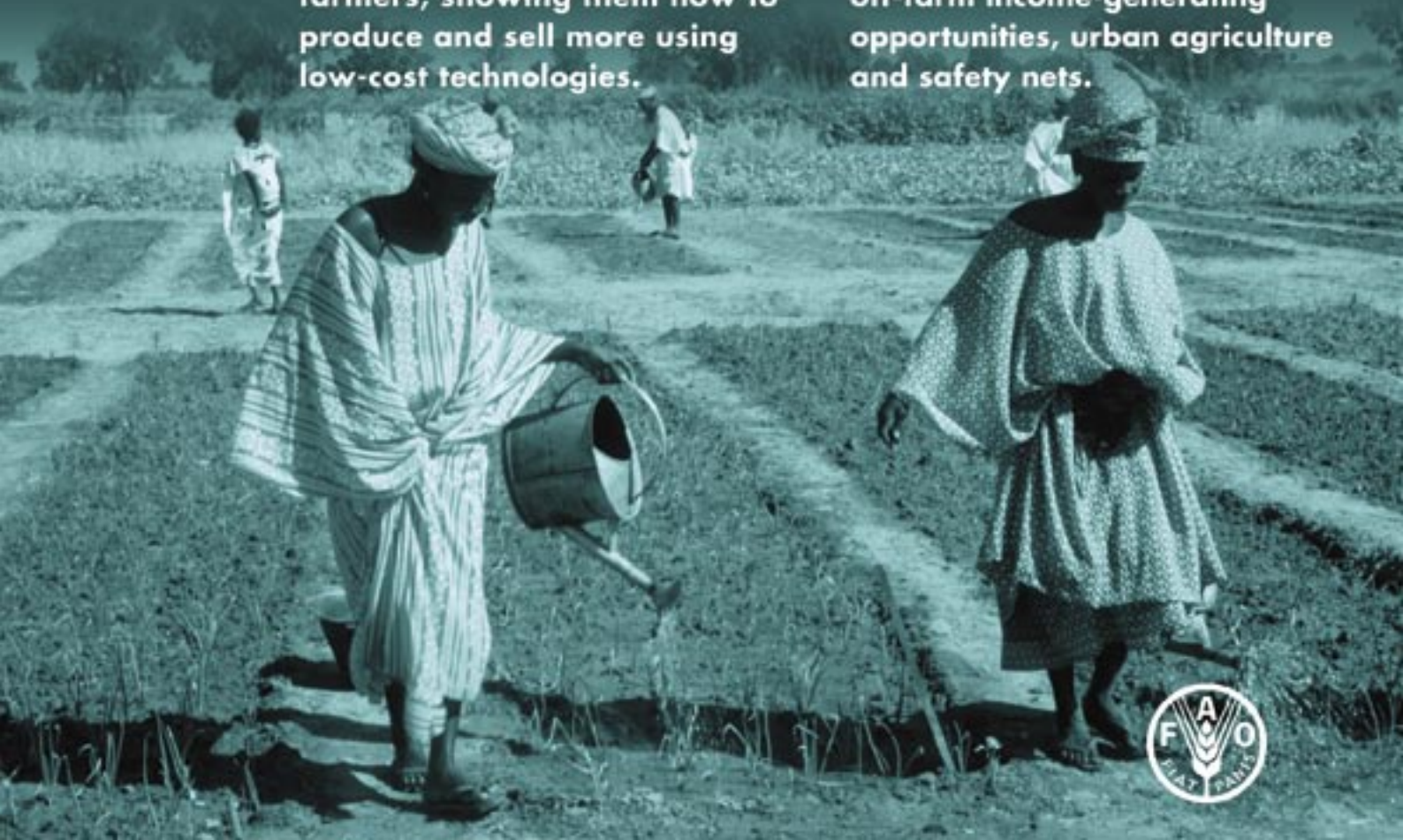
FROM THOUSANDS TO MILLIONS

**a new, nationally owned
approach to ending hunger**



Most rural people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The Special Programme for Food Security initially targeted limited numbers of small-scale farmers, showing them how to produce and sell more using low-cost technologies.

Today the Programme helps governments replicate successful experiences on a national scale, while also encouraging investment in rural infrastructure, off-farm income-generating opportunities, urban agriculture and safety nets.





From pilot projects to national commitments

During the first decade following its establishment in 1994, the Special Programme for Food Security focused on helping countries promote and disseminate simple, low-cost technologies that would improve yields and incomes for poor farming households. But with one in seven people deprived of the food needed for an active healthy life, the scale of the effort needed to be multiplied many times over.

The Programme needed to reach not thousands, but millions.

After the 2002 World Food Summit: five years later, the

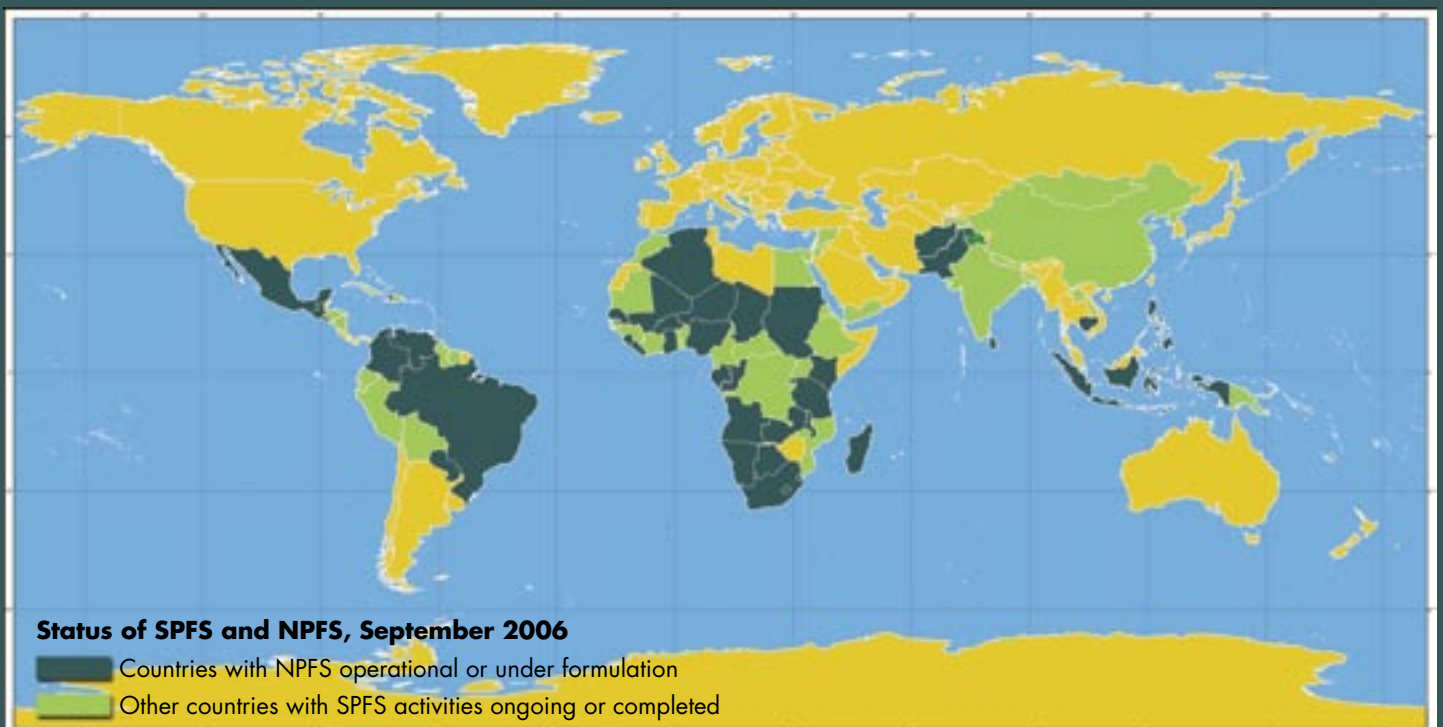
Programme's focus shifted from small-scale pilot demonstration projects to helping countries establish National Programmes for Food Security – programmes that could reach the entire food-insecure population. Efforts to directly reach many more farmers are complemented by policies and investments to open up markets and provide direct access to food for those too poor to produce or acquire it themselves.

Today, National Programmes for Food Security offer a broad overall framework for achieving global targets for reducing poverty and hunger

by half by 2015. While no two national programmes are exactly alike, they are all characterized by:

- ♦ strong national commitment;
- ♦ supportive policies and regulations;
- ♦ the full engagement of civil society.

Altogether, 105 countries had implemented some form of Special Programme for Food Security between 1995 and 2005. By mid-2006, nearly half had begun shifting to National Programmes for Food Security, and more were preparing to do so.





Richness in diversity

Implementing the Right to Food

Guatemala

Thanks to the commitment of government and the involvement of people from all walks of life, Guatemala formally acknowledged the Right to Food with a new Food Security Law enacted in 2005. To implement the law, the Government has established a food security secretariat and committed US\$1 million of its own resources, together with funds provided by Spain, for asset-creation activities in rural areas this year. The aim is to reach 85 000 poor households by the end of 2008. Urban food banks supported by the private sector are another sign of the new national commitment to eradicating hunger. An international team funded by Spain and Italy has been following the process.

Integrating health, nutrition and production

Colombia

Colombia's Special Programme for Food Security kicked off in 2005 with US\$6 million from the national budget and US\$400 000 from FAO. In the Department of Antioquia, targeted health measures had already reduced mortality among children under five due to acute undernutrition by nearly half from 2000 levels. With support from the new programme, beneficiary households are now learning improved techniques for small-scale agricultural production to improve their livelihoods in ways that are sustainable. Meanwhile, the programme team is working with the City of Bogota on an urban agriculture initiative and with the country's Network for Food Security on promoting small-scale production for home consumption in rural areas. A technical group is working with support from FAO on a comprehensive national programme to achieve food security throughout the country.

Making arid fields bloom

Nigeria

Irregular rainfall and water scarcity are growing concerns for farmers in many parts of Nigeria. Early projects, involving technicians from China, focused on introducing low-cost techniques for safely capturing and storing water and for irrigating small plots. Nigeria now plans to commit over US\$363 million (60 percent from its own resources, 40 percent in loans) to further expand this successful approach. The goal is to reach over one million small farming families nationwide over the next five years. In addition to improved water management techniques the new National Programme for Food Security will offer technologies for diversifying production and improving yields, and provide mini-enterprise loans to very poor people with no previous borrowing experience.

Creating economic opportunity for food-insecure families

South Africa

In 2002, the Government of South Africa committed US\$14.6 million for a five-year Special Programme for Food Security to improve conditions for the poorest households in selected nodal areas of three provinces. Development of school, community and household gardens, harnessing of valuable water supplies, using land more productively and improving access to agricultural market information, are just a few of the opportunities on offer. The programme has now been expanded into a national Household Food Production Programme and integrated into the country's Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme. In addition to funds already committed, national and provincial authorities together will provide US\$14.5 million annually to reach households in all nine provinces, with an initial target of 62 000 households in 2006-07.

Helping women reclaim their lives

Cambodia

Focusing in particular on landless women and war widows, the Special Programme for Food Security has helped over 7 000 vulnerable households achieve greater prosperity in post-conflict Cambodia. Farmer field schools, improved irrigation practices, savings groups, community micro-projects and off-farm income-generating activities are among the tested approaches being used. Funding partners other than FAO have included the UN Fund for International Partnerships, the UN Human Security Fund, OPEC and Italy. Successful approaches are now being incorporated in the government's National Household Food Security and Poverty Reduction Programme. Formulated in 2006, this five-year programme aims to scale up these approaches through locally managed community micro-projects in over 6 500 villages throughout the country.

Opening regional markets for small farmer produce

West Africa

All eight member states of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) belong to a single vast land mass, much of it distant from coastal areas. To make it easier for inland farmers to sell their produce in large urban markets near the coast, UEMOA Heads of State in 1996 liberalized agricultural trade as their first official act and later authorized action to stop informal taxation at border crossings. Now, with technical support provided through the Regional Programme for Food Security, UEMOA member states are aligning their food safety legislation and regulations on plant and animal hygiene. Small farmers are also benefiting from regional efforts to intensify the production of high-demand food crops like rice and maize. Funding comes from FAO, Italy and UEMOA itself.



South-South Cooperation – a crucial source of support

Through special “South-South Cooperation” agreements arranged by FAO, technicians from emerging developing countries work directly with farmers in

host countries, sharing their knowledge and skills. As of June 2006, more than 600 technicians were actively involved, working under 37 different signed agreements.

Through new strategic alliances with China and other advanced developing countries, many more individuals will be fielded in the near future.

Beyond countries...

In almost all parts of the world, governments have formed regional organizations to address common concerns.

To complement national programmes for food security, these organizations are encouraged to formulate and implement Regional Programmes for Food Security (RPFS) aiming at:

- ♦ building public awareness of the critical importance of food

and nutrition security;

- ♦ formulating regional food and agricultural trade strategies and policies;
- ♦ aligning border measures and safety standards that affect food and agricultural trade;
- ♦ promoting investment in regional communication infrastructure and market information;
- ♦ supporting national efforts to help small farmers become

more efficient and find new markets for their produce.

By mid-2006, FAO had assisted in the formulation of 20 such programmes. Three regional organizations – CARICOM/CARIFORUM, Pacific Islands Forum and the West African Economic and Monetary Union – were already moving ahead with agreed activities.

FAO's role is to help countries formulate national and regional programmes for food security and mobilize resources, and to provide technical support and expert advice.





Assets matter

The challenge of reducing poverty and hunger by half is essentially a matter of creating assets. Without assets, it is difficult for poor people to improve their lives. Having assets gives people options for earning a living, or for coping when things go wrong. Families with adequate assets can grow or purchase the food they need. Those without often cannot.

Assets include things like:

- ◆ personal health, skills and knowledge;
- ◆ land, water, forests, natural vegetation, wild animals, gemstones, minerals;
- ◆ buildings, farm animals, tools and equipment, vehicles, supplies, inventory;

- ◆ savings, access to credit;
- ◆ schools, health clinics, community organizations, markets.

For poor people who depend on agriculture, access to land and other natural resources is an essential starting point. Ensuring that farmers – both women and men – own their land and can use nearby water, pasture and forests is vital.

Many impoverished rural households also need an injection of improved technology, so that their daily labours generate a greater return. Introducing simple, low-cost technologies and showing rural people how to use them has been a hallmark of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security.

Today, with National Programmes for Food Security, governments are carrying forward this work on a much larger scale. They are also investing in complementary assets like roads, communication infrastructure and social services, while private-sector partners work to open up markets and help make credit more available to the poor. The degree of national commitment – and the scale of countries' efforts to help the rural poor increase their assets – will be important determining factors as the world strives to reach the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015.

Want to know more?

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Special Programme for Food Security