Executive summary

Main findings

Food security and nutrition (FSN) policies have been dominated by top-down approaches

To date, food security and nutrition (FSN) policies have been developed mainly through traditional, "top-down" approaches; that is, they are designed and implemented at the national level, often without sufficiently taking into account the priorities and needs of local stakeholders, and without involving them in the policy-making process. This lack of co-ordination and stakeholder engagement is exacerbated when policies are the result of project-based international co-operation efforts; the short timelines and narrowly targeted nature of such projects can lead to fragmented policy and programme interventions and generate local dependency on external aid. The need for a "bottom-up" approach – where different levels of government work together – is increasingly recognised by the countries covered in this report (Cambodia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Morocco, Niger and Peru).

Geography matters for food security and nutrition policy

Disparities in FSN levels are increasing, both among countries and *within* countries. For example, food insecurity and rural poverty usually go hand-in-hand and are often concentrated in specific geographic areas. National averages typically mask these pockets of poverty and food insecurity. The country case studies in this report highlight the importance of targeting policies to fight food insecurity in very specific regions, in addition to existing national-level policies. Such targeted policies are better placed to address the causes and possible solutions to hunger and malnutrition, which can differ significantly across metropolitan, adjacent rural and remote rural areas.

To date, food security and nutrition policies have largely taken a sectoral approach

Policies tackling hunger and malnutrition have traditionally focused on the agriculture sector and on temporary relief interventions. These interventions have produced modest results in reducing food insecurity and disparities among people and across geographic areas. Efforts have focused mainly on food production without sufficiently taking into account the other dimensions of FSN, namely availability, access, utilisation and stability. The case studies show that poverty is often the main cause of food insecurity, and addressing it is critical to finding a sustainable solution. Consequently, promoting off-farm employment opportunities can have a positive income effect on individuals who are suffering from hunger and can improve the access dimension of FSN. In addition to low incomes, other causes of food insecurity include unemployment, natural resources degradation, low health and education status, weak institutions and governance systems, and lack of co-ordination across different policies and levels of government.
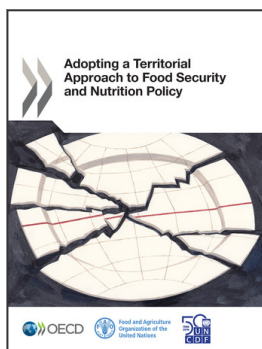
Key recommendations

A territorial approach is needed for better food security and nutrition policy

Current food security and nutrition policies are characterised by a sectoral, top-down and "one-size-fits-all" approach that has been unable to deliver appropriate long-term responses to food insecurity. The regional and context-specific nature of FSN has been broadly overlooked. There is a need for a paradigm shift in addressing FSN policy that embraces multisectoral, bottom-up and place-based interventions. This can be achieved through a territorial approach to FSN. In this framework, aligning objectives and actions across levels of government is critical. Doing so improves the vertical and horizontal co-ordination of FSN policies and interventions. Similarly, a territorial approach allows the diversity of different territories to be taken into account, and leads to a better understanding of differences in development opportunities that are so often missed with one-dimensional or one-size-fits-all policies. A territorial approach also recognises and capitalises on the benefits of urban-rural linkages, instead of addressing urban and rural areas through different, often disconnected, policies.

A territorial approach can help food security and nutrition policy and should focus on four key domains:

1. **Enhancing strategies and programmes beyond agriculture.** Agricultural interventions are important, but not sufficient, to adequately address food insecurity and malnutrition. Most countries now recognise FSN as a multidimensional issue, but implementation is still very sectoral, and the opportunities offered by the off-farm rural economy are often unexploited. There is also insufficient attention paid to differences in geographic conditions and to income inequalities

2. **Promoting multi-level governance systems to strengthening horizontal and vertical co-ordination.** The case studies show that lack of vertical and horizontal co-ordination at the central level and weak, decentralised government bodies and stakeholders are a major obstacle to the implementation of FSN strategies and policies. Improving capacity at the local and regional levels is a key priority since it can help with the implementation of FSN policy. It is also a necessary condition to promote a bottom-up approach that can scale-up innovations undertaken at the local level.

3. **Increasing the availability of data and indicators at the local and regional levels to support evidence-based FSN policy.** The case studies highlight the lack of reliable data as one of the main constraints for effective FSN policy, particularly at the sub-national level. More information at the local and regional levels can help identify the bottlenecks that are hampering food security and establish areas of priority.

4. **Linking social policies with economic growth policies.** FSN is usually addressed through social policies and programmes (e.g. social protection) that are key to supporting people facing food insecurity. These policies could be made more sustainable and have a much stronger impact if they were better co-ordinated and integrated with growth policies.

From:

Adopting a Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition Policy