

Dick de Zeeuw Lecture 2014



Paradigm shift to secure food

Gerda Verburg

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By

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Ladies and gentlemen, In his 1963 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, the late US president John F. Kennedy expressed two ambitions for that decade: to commit to a manned moon mission and to end world poverty and hunger. On July 21 1969, Apollo 11 landed on the moon. However we unfortunately still have not ended hunger. What does this tell about the complexity of solving hunger?

Today, we live in an age of interlinked challenges but also of endless opportunities. The world population grows and will continue to do so, for the years to come. We are about to take stock of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG's): the 8 goals that were set in 2000 to alleviate poverty and enhance development. This will pave the way for a global development agenda beyond 2015. In 2012, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon launched the Zero Hunger Challenge: a declaration with targets to eliminate hunger in our lifetime. Although these various initiatives are necessary, it makes sense for us to take some distance and look at why solutions are not working well enough and what the hidden forces are, working beneath the surface. The way forward can be effectively summarized by Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign slogan: "It's the economy, stupid!".

Moving beyond self-interest

I am delighted and honored to give the Dick de Zeeuw lecture this year. Although I never met him personally, I recognize a lot in Mr. De Zeeuw's approach to agriculture and food security.

Three examples:

1. Dick de Zeeuw called for more attention to investments in agriculture. Attention to innovative and sustainable agriculture and high quality food these days is even more important than it was 50 years ago. The world population has increased, but so have innovation and productivity: worldwide food security is within reach. It is our duty to realize this!
2. His belief in looking beyond government for solutions. Dick de Zeeuw was in favor of bringing together government and 'subjects' (as citizens were called then) and pleaded for freedom to be combined with responsibility. I do not use the word 'subjects', but I'm a convinced advocate of people's power to achieve concrete results

together with their governments and others: the multi-stakeholder approach.

3. That brings me to a third point: the special attention Dick de Zeeuw had for the impact of politics and policies on people's lives and society. He was quite vocal on this.

Dick de Zeeuw was born in the same year my father was: 1924. Unfortunately both have passed away. But both would have had a prominent place on my list of people to turn to for discussion and advice. So I am indeed thankful and honored by the invitation to commemorate Dick de Zeeuw with you here today.

In the minutes ahead of us I would like to share with you my vision of the paradigm shift we need in order to attain global food security for all. My core message is that we can move beyond short-term economic self-interest and build trust in each other, so that we can jointly move ahead.

This requires three things:

First: **inclusiveness**. The views and interests of all stakeholders related to agriculture and food security, need to be recognized and taken on board in designing and implementing policy.

Second: it is important that our policies and actions are **evidence-based** and that knowledge and information are shared among all stakeholders.

Third: each of us should take individual actions, with **collective responsibility** towards society in mind, so that together we can reach the common goal of sustainable global food security.

Let me start by describing some of the paradoxes and difficulties that stand in the way of food security for all. I will do this by looking at different stakeholders in the field of agriculture and food security, see which role they play, and how their interests might collide or collude.

1. First and foremost there are farmers. There's a huge diversity among them, from tiny smallholders in developing countries to high-tech *megafarms*. This means a great variety of contexts and scales, depending on natural, political and economic conditions. Farmers are entrepreneurs who produce to make a living. Most farmers are family farmers, also in the EU. Family members do the work, make investments and run the risks of poor harvest and other shocks. The UN has proclaimed 2014 the International Year of Family Farming.

The objective is to raise awareness and re-position family farming at the heart of agricultural, rural, environmental and social policies. Our food is produced by farmers. Paradoxically however, the majority of the 842 million hungry people in the world are farmers and their families!

Furthermore there are more resource and environmental constraints for farmers than 30 years ago, which create additional challenges and complications.

Above this there is the ongoing trend towards urbanization. Cities are not only transforming agricultural land into urban area, they also attract young rural people to move to the city with the hope of making a better living: less hard work and higher income. Worldwide it is a big problem to find enough young people, willing to take over their parents' or another farm, and to produce the world's food; from small African family farms to the US and Asia, but also here in the Netherlands as we can learn from the Dutch tv-show *Boer zoekt vrouw*.

On top of that, one third of the food that farmers produce globally, is lost between harvest and consumption. This implies higher costs of food and unnecessary use of natural resources and environmental services, including greenhouse gases that have been emitted for food that is not eaten.

2. Second, consumers. Consumers are an important stakeholder in a growing world population of over 7 billion people – projected to reach 9 billion by 2050. Food consumption is not divided equally: around 80% of the world's production is consumed by the wealthiest 20%. While around 842 million are hungry and 2 billion are malnourished, a fast growing number suffer from obesity (currently already over 1 billion). As we speak, a huge and increasingly affluent middle class is arising in newly developed countries. This growing middle class is hungry for more meat, fish and dairy. If these people would copy the consumption pattern of their peers in Europe and North-America, we would need some additional planets to keep up with demand. At the same time we should strive to preserve enough renewable natural resources for future generations.

Fortunately, particularly in Western countries, consumer mindsets are slowly changing and public awareness and consciousness

campaigns gain clout, assisted by new technologies and social media. This also applies to the increasing ability of consumer organizations to influence the food industry and governments, for example by taking social responsibility. I was happy to learn that many Dutch restaurants intend to join a campaign to offer their customers 'doggy bags' to diminish food waste. Where food losses concern farmers and occur mainly in developing countries, food waste relates to (mainly Western) consumers. It includes the food left on our plates after dinner, but also products thrown away after their expiry date or because they are not allowed to leave the factory due to incorrect labeling or appearance. The average European or North-American wastes around 100 kg of food per, each year!

3. Third, governments and international organizations constitute a crucial stakeholder category. Governments should commit to put food security at the top of the development agenda, and develop an enabling environment for farmers and other investors in the food system. An enabling environment means having evidence-based policies, programs, governance and institutions. They can support food producers with public investments, and facilitate private investments with a sound and stable legal framework. Their policies and programs have a tremendous impact on the worldwide availability of and access to food. But how many countries are really giving proper attention to the organization of their food systems? Certainly the challenges (peace, security, prosperity) are sometimes too big and interconnected to be solved durably by governments alone. And clearly interests between governments and even ministries within governments diverge. But it is important to realize at all times that farmers will only be sowing if they have the expectation to harvest.

The effectiveness of bilateral development assistance programs and humanitarian interventions depends first of all on the expectations there are when designing them. There is a difference between short-term and long-term goals, which needs to be acknowledged and managed by governments and national parliaments. There can be shortcomings in implementation power of donor countries' capacity to make the difference for the people at grassroots, on the longer term. And several times there is still a lack of ownership for durable improvements at the level of host governments.

International organizations all have their own vision and means of intervention. This helps to address the diversity of food security related issues, with often different dimensions. But it also creates risks of overlap or “mandate creep”, that may cause duplication or even contradictory interventions and messages. There is a risk of hidden competition, sometimes motivated by resource capturing, with no real incentive for partnerships, sharing of information and resources.

4. Fourth: Civil society organizations. They are serious and important partners with the possibility and responsibility to represent people that would otherwise not be heard. And they often have access to people that are very hard to reach, helped by the fact that many CSO's are working independently of governments. Irrespective of this crucial role, they, like other stakeholders, need to be mindful of whom they are representing. Some of these organizations cherish the ideal of smallholder farmers. Great. Small might be appealing, but if it means that smallholders stay hungry, poor and dependent, then something is clearly wrong. Smallholders (in Africa mostly women) need support to improve their livelihoods themselves in order to create a better future for their children and grandchildren. Civil society organizations can contribute to bringing together smallholders, and support them in strengthening their position themselves, for example through cooperatives, skills, and/or production and market strategies.
5. Last but not least, industry and business. The private sector has only recently been acknowledged as a key stakeholder in food security. It is a key category, as its role has evolved much during the past years and is expected to grow further within the food system. While one of their goals is to make profit, the attention of many entrepreneurs is increasingly focused on realizing long term, sustainable results. Building longer-term relationships with suppliers, governments and consumers is essential. We have some prime examples of this in the Netherlands (Unilever, DSM, Friesland Campina). It is my conviction that more and more companies are willing to cooperate in a transparent way in order to contribute to increasing worldwide food security in a sustainable and responsible way.

Summarizing: all stakeholders bring their own perspectives and assets with regard to food security, and each have their own challenges. But we must remain optimistic about our ability to improve. With innovative techniques, capabilities and given opportunities, we can contribute to

change in order to attain sustainable benefits for all (Win-Win). We should concentrate on three things: inclusiveness, knowledge and responsibility. They constitute the paradigm shift the world needs to reach global, sustainable food systems and food security for all. Sustainability in all three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental.

Inclusiveness, knowledge and evidence, and responsibility

So, how can we move forward?

- The first crucial key to success is **inclusiveness**. Henry Ford recognized this universal truth when he said: “coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.” Likewise, at the other side of the planet there is a traditional African proverb saying: “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. In the case of food security, we want to do both: we want to eliminate hunger (going far), and do this as quickly as possible. This means hard work for each of us to make our contribution, and cooperate to ensure durable results. I can demonstrate the added value of working together with some clear examples from my own experience as Chair of the Committee on World Food Security. The United Nations’ CFS is worldwide the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together in a coordinated way to achieve food security and nutrition for all. Even though this way of working, with the private sector and civil society having an equal position at the table, is in our Dutch genes, it is a sea change for intergovernmental work, which slowly but steadily gains clout in the UN system.

I want us all to realize how essential the multi-stakeholder approach is in tackling issues of food security and nutrition. Just imagine how many of the interests and dimensions that we have just discussed would not be fully taken on board if policy dialogue just took place among States and international organizations! We need to have all relevant actors around the table. We need to be open to accommodate different views, ranging from people most affected by food insecurity, like smallholders, women, indigenous communities, etc. to those having the economic or political power to change things for the better. Inclusive decisions taken at the international level, taking on board the positions of all stakeholders, are more likely to be durable over time. And the various actors, just as conveyors belts, can then transfer

these decisions back to the field: back to national level, where implementation takes place.

Working together is also necessary because food security is interconnected with so many different issues, which go beyond direct agricultural production, but which we need to consider in their own context. Take climate change: In the discussion on reducing carbon emissions, agriculture and food production were long seen as part of the problem. But for some farmers who struggle to feed her/his family, climate change is an abstract notion, not a first priority. Now, step by step, realizing how interconnected climate and food security are, we are becoming more and more aware of the opportunity that sustainable agriculture represents with regard to climate change: it is indeed part of the solution.

For a long time there was a focus on global food availability. It is now very clear that even in the face of a plentitude of food, we struggle to ensure food security. Access to food, its utilization and stability are key factors.

This recognition is not really new. What is new is our increased understanding that to work on food security, one has to consider it in practice, in all its dimensions, and coordinate actions to promote food security. We live in a small, interconnected world. Increasingly, decisions taken in one part of the world have remote effects elsewhere. And there is a need to respond to those who are impacted, often the most vulnerable.

I have mentioned lack of cooperation and coordination as a major barrier to achieve food security at the international level. Let me take one very concrete example: banana losses in Kenya. The government of Kenya made major efforts to improve banana production and handling by farmers, including intensive training. As a result, losses at farm level have dropped dramatically and bananas leave the farm in good condition. Unfortunately, poor handling during transport and successive stages, still cause massive losses, considerably limiting the impact of farmers' efforts. So now of course improvements will be pursued along the processing chain. This example shows how delivering final results call for collective, coordinated action, involving many diverse actors.

Within the CFS we have worked on voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT). It took 2 years to reach an agreement among all different stakeholders, each with their own interests. But it was worth the effort. Because every stakeholder is proud of the result of the collective work, and show ownership at all levels. These two years have helped not only to arrive at an agreement in Rome, but also to prepare all actors to implement the guidelines together in their own countries, and to cooperate at grassroots level as well. So it is an investment for the long term. This investment in time, in understanding, in trust, is also what enabled us within CFS to deal with another major issue: Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems. Again a challenge, but something that is at the heart of the matter of our work. We reached an agreement after long and tough negotiations on August 8th this year. I am optimistic that we can transform recognition of our shared role and responsibility into shared investment. Be it financial, social, environmental or in terms of time. Investment in understanding each other, investment in growing together. And make no mistake about the fact that these documents are “voluntary”: signing such guidelines or principles means politically and morally committing to them, whether they are voluntary or binding. This was demonstrated during the so-called stocktaking event we organized to mark the first two years since endorsement of the VGGT. Many countries (among which Senegal, Niger, Liberia and Sierra Leone), companies (like Unilever, Coca Cola and Pepsi) and CSO’s (for instance Oxfam) now actively use them in their national policies, business practices and to monitor and report (on) corporate social responsibility.

- Secondly, **knowledge exchange** is essential. We must learn from what has worked and base our actions and policies on **evidence**. The past years have shown a tremendous increase in attention to proper Monitoring & Evaluation instruments, to measure effects and outcomes of policies and interventions. Many donor countries, like the Netherlands, now emphasize results-based programming. And they are right. This is especially important in fields such as food security and nutrition, where the added value of an intervention is often difficult to measure and baseline data (documenting where we are before the project starts) is not available.

Let me use CFS again, to demonstrate the practical importance of evidence-based working. Grounding our work on evidence is the key

to broadening and deepening our understanding of food insecurity and malnutrition and of its immediate and underlying causes. For that, we need to build on knowledge and results. It requires scientific expertise on different levels and interaction with stakeholders. This is why we have created the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), a dedicated group of international scientists that provides independent, evidence-based analysis on the themes we are working on. A sound basis before we make any policy recommendations to our Member States! We also spend time and effort to look back, and we learn lessons and draw conclusions from previous processes. For instance, experiences gathered during negotiations on the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments (RAI), will feed into the organization of future negotiations. It is very important (but often neglected) to be frank and transparent about what works and what doesn't; both are valuable. Our strategy is: operate transparently, and make use of the tool of 'naming and faming'. We should be able to show where our work adds sustainable value.

Knowledge sharing should also be regarded from the perspective of self-interest. When talking about partnerships, the CEO of an international enterprise told me that UN organizations still seemed to be primarily interested in his wallet. And that should change. It is time for innovative partnerships with the private sector. A company like Unilever can add so much valuable knowledge on business processes, logistics, value chain management and markets to the work of international organizations, helping their beneficiaries, that it is really a pity to see them as just another donor. In turn, Unilever and other companies can contribute to creating new sustainable supplier and customer relations and create or get access to markets. Everyone benefits!

- Thirdly, **responsibility and ownership** must be felt at all levels. This can make a big difference and here again there could be conflicts of interest. For example interests surrounding development assistance contributions. Recipient countries should take ownership for programs that take place in their countries before taking over these programs. They should strive to become independent from donors. But strengthening the agricultural sector might not be the first priority for host governments. And how can it possibly be explained that emergency relief organizations like the World Food Program have been conducting

their operations in the same country for over 20 years? That is not what they have been created for. International organizations with a comparable focus sometimes compete for the same funding. The temptation to move beyond their own mandate and set up parallel structures, rather than cooperating with other organizations, cannot be denied. Donors, be they States or others, should require host government participation and eventual ownership as a pillar in all activities they support, as well as cooperation between international organizations and local partners where possible. Trying is not a sufficient answer, optionality is not an option.

There are already good examples of countries that are showing the lead in cross-sectorial collaboration, and where stakeholders play a responsible role in relation to one another:

In Mozambique the country teams of the three UN organizations based in Rome (the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Program and the International Fund for Agricultural Development) have been recognized and awarded for their achievement in “Delivering as One” (as we call it within the UN system): Building on the comparative advantage of each organization, they engage in activities to improve food availability and access along the value chain, increasing use of nutritious foods and improving resilience through disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The teams combine WFP's procurement and logistics skills, with the technical expertise of FAO and IFAD's knowledge of business management and access to credit.

In Rwanda, integrated and complementary interventions address all dimensions of food security. The program to increase agricultural productivity has been complemented in 2011 by a National Post-Harvest Staple Crop Strategy and an Action Plan to effectively reduce losses and improve harvesting, handling, trade, storage and marketing skills of local farmers. The Vision 2020 Programme builds on the experience that, I quote, "isolated interventions by sector ministries, donors or NGO's are not sufficient to lift people out of extreme poverty". The program has three components:

1. Cash transfers to the poorest rural households that have no labor capacity;
2. Invest in public works on community and agriculture infrastructures, with the costs of these investments flowing back into the economy as salaries;

3. Facilitate the financing of micro enterprises.

Ownership also means showing responsibility for your actions and for the solutions you help to create. In the multi-stakeholder environment I'm operating in, not all partners are accustomed to this role yet. Moving forward together means embarking on a process of negotiations, of give and take, towards results we all can be proud of.

Summarizing: inclusiveness, knowledge and evidence, and responsibility – are the pillars to support us in moving beyond short-term interests and towards sustainable solutions in agriculture and food security. All stakeholders need the attitude and will to work together, listen to each other, learn from each other, take ownership of their actions and invest in relations in order to build trust. This takes time and effort. But investment in trust and in a multi-stakeholder approach is necessary to move towards “the world we want”. As we say in Dutch: “vertrouwen komt te voet en gaat te paard”. And trust always needs investment to grow. But, trust will prove to be the basis to move ahead and to implement at grassroots level what we have decided upon. To paraphrase FAO's Director-General Graziano da Silva on the link between peace and food security: there can be no durable food security without peace, nor can there be durable peace without food security.

I believe that the method I described is the preferred one to tackle global issues in the future. The UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, addressed CFS stakeholders in May of this year in Rome. The SG praised the innovative multi-stakeholder approach and stressed the importance of the “Rome agenda” on nutrition and sustainable agriculture for the post-2015 Development agenda.

Pursuing self-interest in the short term has caused long-term problems to persist or to spread. Self-interest in the long-term means: working together, based on knowledge and evidence, rooted in ownership and responsibility. That's the smart economy, and it is in everyone's interest!

Thank you very much for your attention.

The world food system is full of paradoxes. While enough food is being produced to feed everyone on the planet, more than 840 million people are undernourished, among which 165 million children. At the same time one third of all produced food is either lost or wasted. The majority of food-insecure people live in rural areas where most of the world's food is being produced! Farmers struggle to maintain a profitable livelihood, and are confronted with tightening environmental constraints in the face of climate change. Added to that, they have great difficulty finding successors. These issues affect us all. The problems are well-known, and thousands of programmes and projects have been developed and implemented. But where are the concrete and lasting results?

What is going wrong here? *"It's the economy, stupid!"*

Gerda Verburg

Gerda Verburg was born on a dairy farm in the Green Heart of the Netherlands. In 2007 she was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. In her period as Minister, she gave priority and special attention to innovative and sustainable agriculture and food security, both at national, EU and international level. After her term as Minister, she was appointed Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN Organisations for Food and Agriculture in Rome (FAO, WFP and IFAD). In October 2013 Gerda Verburg was elected as Chair of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). This is a multi-stakeholder committee where governments, civil society, private sector, research institutions and others deal with food and nutrition related topics.

