General Overview

Conceptual Framework and Practical Suggestions for Civil Society

Adib Nehmeh
Advisor to ANND
Preface

The fourth Arab Watch Report on Economic and Social Rights 2019: The Right to Food in Arab Countries, includes three parts.

1. The first section contains:
   - Introduction by Ziad Abdel Samad, the Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND).
   - Presentation by Roberto Bissio, Social Watch coordinator.
   - General presentation, prepared by Adib Nehme, Advisor to ANND.

2. The second section includes the following thematic research:
   - Background Document
   - Towards food sovereignty and a politicized right to food
   - The Integration of the Political Economy of Arab Food Systems Under Global Food Regimes
   - Shifting the paradigm: moving towards food sovereignty, theoretical and practical reflections
   - Impact of Agricultural Policies on Food Security in the Arab Region
   - Right to Food and Food Sovereignty from a Gender Perspective

3. The third section encompasses national reports from the following countries:
   - Algeria
   - Egypt
   - Jordan
   - Lebanon
   - Palestine
   - Mauritania
   - Morocco
   - Sudan
   - Syria
   - Yemen.

The report is designed in this manner to allow various types of readers, with diverse interests, to benefit from it and put it into optimal use as a source of work, intervention, and research. Non-specialized readers, interlocutors, and activists from various civil society organizations, as well as non-specialized researchers will benefit from the first section as a comprehensive text that summarizes the overall content of the report and lessons learned. Those researching and working on a regional level will find more material related to policies that deal with concepts in a detailed fashion and that offer critical views on said policies and other issues shared across countries, which do not relate exclusively to the necessary national scope, including globalization, the gender dimension, and common transition in agricultural policies and food systems in countries of the region. The third section includes national research papers of related countries, whereby one can follow the detailed development of right to food problematics through the historical experience of each country in as much detail as possible.

The report embraces a general theoretical framework to the right to food and adopts food sovereignty as a more sophisticated and comprehensive concept than that of food security prevailing in international circles.

It is to be noted that the many participating researchers who worked on this report had varying approaches (which is healthy), despite sharing the basic elements. Henceforth, one will find some discrepancies in the explanation of certain concepts, or in the tendency to focus on a certain concept and utilize it in analysis, each in his own way. This enriches the report and adds to its value for the reader, away from rigid dogmatic presentation. The reader may also note some repetition within the papers, especially national papers, as each researcher presented paragraphs pertaining to concepts and had a personal approach to the subject matter. However, the current overview includes the essence of the entire report and consists of three axes, as follows:

- The first axis includes a theoretical aspect presenting concepts in a consistent manner and reconciles various elements of the different approaches from a pragmatic and functional perspective. It allows readers and non-specialized activists to get acquainted with the basic elements of the right to food, food security, and food sovereignty, and the numerous correlations between them and other developmental concepts.
  - The second axis includes an overview of the colonial period and its continuous effects, and of occupation, which sheds light on the common aspect of all national experiences.
  - The third axis comprises of conclusions and recommendations on the direction to be taken by civil society organizations in their work in the field of right to food.

The purpose of the general presentation is to allow the non-specialized reader to formulate a comprehensive and integrated idea on the topic of the report, and encourage the said reader to broaden his/her reading of thematic and national papers by attracting attention to certain pivotal points that grant each national experience a regional or international dimension. This overview provides the reader primary theoretical keys to enable the reading and understanding of all papers, despite the occasional depth and specialization of the research.

Finally, what is included in this presentation is almost entirely present in the papers contained in the report; still, it retains its own identity, especially in terms of linking elements and some aspects of analysis. Thus, the ANND team is liable for the content of this presentation in terms of any explanation or analysis that does not exactly match the contribution of the individual researchers who prepared the reports. Moreover, this text (the overview) did not include research into additional sources except in a limited manner, and it used the papers that comprise the report itself, hence, a reference to these papers suffice without the need for marginal details. We also endeavored to make the language of the text as accurate as necessary, while still within the grasp of the non-specialized reader, for the sake of facilitating reading and expanding benefits.
Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights

Right To Food

First Axis: Conceptual Framework

Three concepts are used repetitively in this report – and others that deal with the same topic - which are: the right of food, food security, and food sovereignty. These three concepts have common denominators as well as distinctions and differences. In fact, in targeted use for the sake of specific ideas or policies, these concepts may be contrasting or contradictory at times. However, an important aspect of this contradiction between concepts results from partitioning them and taking them out of context, as well as their predominant use, which is often associated with specific choices at the level of thought or policies. Once put back into their intellectual and historical contexts, the gap between them shrinks and the elements of distinction and contradiction become clearer, allowing for their use in an objective discussion.

In the following segments, we will delve deeply into the three concepts and compare between them after placing them back into the context that prompts them. We will also briefly look at their relation to other concepts, specifically the concept of human security, the right to development, and Agenda 2030.

1. Right to Food…Right to Life

Humans have never viewed food as a regular commodity due to its close connection to human survival and life since the emergence of human societies. Thus, the extreme commodification (turning food into a marketable good) currently prevalent in world economy (and national ones) seems like an anomaly and strays away from the innate logic marking both individual and social human behavior across human civilization. That is why the biggest portion of food is produced and consumed within relatively tight circles, starting from personal consumption of food producers, to consumption the Arabic term for “security” with the term insecurity; however, it is an inadequate translation when those concerned are individuals and families and their right to constant access to adequate food. In this case, perhaps it is best to exchange the Arabic term for “security” with the more relatable term for “safety” (aman), a meaning inherent to the foreign term.

Box 1: The Right to Food in the International Human Rights System

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (especially Article 25):
  - Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (especially Article 11):
  - The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on mutual respect for freedoms and fundamental rights.

Source: Mahjoub and Belghith

Furthermore, the right to food, which is tightly linked to the right to life, was mentioned in the declaration as the primary right. Following article one, which states that “all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights...”, and article two which stipulates that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind...”, article three declares the first right included in the declaration as follows: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” This right to life obviously necessitates the right to acquire the tools for survival, that is access to proper and sufficient nutrition. This was later mentioned in article 25 (alongside other elements), as well as in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Insisting on linking the right to food to the right to life is pragmatically essential (whether we adopt a rights approach or not), because it is a more genuine expression of the approach of all intellectual and developmental schools to what was mentioned previously on food not being a regular commodity (even if traded in markets as part of the selling and purchasing process). It is a right that organically follows the right to life and survival. Tampering with it is tampering with the original right to life, which is considered the basis of all other rights. This mandates providing right to food for all, stemming from the obligatory respect for the right to life itself. This issue cannot be bypassed, and should be given priority over all other considerations, especially economic and commercial ones.

The fact that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other constituent documents did not provide details on the right to food does not diminish its importance due to the obvious nature of this right that is linked to the right to life (in a biological sense specifically), which should be above all other considerations. As for the current and detailed interest in the right to food and the concepts associated with it (food security, food sovereignty, and others), it was brought about by famine, war, nutrition problems, agricultural development and crises, trade crises, and agricultural exchange on the global level, including the issue of food prices and use in trade wars between states, which has jeopardized the right to food in numerous countries, especially developing ones. This required going into the details of the implementation of the right to food at the global and national levels, as well as at the level of families and individuals. Within this context, the concept of “food security” was born within the United Nations.

2. Rome Conference and the Concept of food security

Discussions on “food security” often begin with the definition specified by the Rome declaration on global food security, issued by the conference on nutrition held in 1996. This also appears in almost all the papers included in this report.

The first paragraph of the declaration specifies the objective and definition as follows: “… a common objective - food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient and safe nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Based on the aforementioned, four basic food security elements were identified: availability of food, access to food, quality and safety of food, and stability of food supply. This definition with all its associated elements became commonplace in all occasions pertaining to food security. For instance, it was mentioned previously on food not being a regular commodity and being a marketable good. Currently, “food security” was born within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In this context, it was natural for food to be considered one of the basic human rights, due to its association with the right to life and survival, upon which all other human rights are built. This right is greatly self-evident and connected to the whole system of values that humans have developed throughout the world. This was expressed in the modern era through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in 1948, and scrutinized in the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (1966) (as presented in details in the Mahjoub-Belghith paper).

1 Mahjoub-Belghith paper details this approach in the report as well as the concept of the right to food and

2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Fragmenting the Concept

The concept of “food security” is subjected to stern criticism at times by supporters of the concept of the right to food and food sovereignty. This criticism is multifaceted and has an objective basis; however, it is partially due to what can be considered as consequences of the concept and putting it out of its context, a thing that the following paragraphs will shed light on.

Commonly, the topic is reduced to what was considered a “definition” of food security in the Rome Declaration, which was mentioned in a previous paragraph. The first fragmentation is part of the same paragraph (first paragraph of the declaration), whereby the aforementioned definition clarifies the common objective that participating states at the Rome conference are attempting to reach “at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels,” as the declaration stated verbatim. Associating the achievement of food security to these levels automatically demands various intricate and complex requirements related to major policies and choices at a national and international level. That is in addition to individual and family level requirements. Overlooking this matter is the first step of rendering the concept void of its content by placing it in the realistic context of the life cycle of individuals, nations, and international relations. This is one element of criticism directed at the concept in its common use, which claims to present itself in a very technical manner away from real world contexts.

Food Security: a means to implement the Right to Development

Technical approaches and segmentation often lead to the confusion about the end with the means. This is what happened when using part of the general concept of food security. The very first paragraph of the Rome Declaration literally states: “We, the Heads of State and Government, or our representatives, gathered at Rome to reaffirm, in the name of the United Nations, the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.”

The commitments that followed the Rome Declaration and the definition of food security were not intended to evade the commitment to the right of food, nor elude the rights approach. On the contrary, the Rome Declaration used the concept of food security and its requirements on the policy level to make the right to food a right that all citizens of Earth can enjoy. This is evident in the aforementioned first paragraph, as well as the entirety of the Rome Declaration. Hence, reducing the Rome Declaration to two or three lines is not acceptable, as it tears the concept of food security away from its context and isolates it for necessary policies for its realization. This puts food security at the center of unfailing criticism from supporters of food sovereignty, because the partial use of the concept detaches it from its policy dimension related to economic and social choices, food systems, agriculture, the rights of producers, consumers and other issues strongly present in the Rome Declaration, while absent from the concept of food security in its common technical and fragmented form.

The value of the Rome Declaration must be reinstated to the essence of its entirety (this does not mean that it is ideal and above criticism), whereby committing to achieving food security for all indicates – according to Rome Declaration- fulfilling seven interrelated commitments:

1. an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for a durable peace...
2. policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality
3. sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development policies and practices, including for the benefit of small-scale producers, sustainable agricultural practices, etc. that are necessary and mandatory for achieving the objective (food security).

3. Food Sovereignty

It came as no surprise when common practices fragmented the concept of food security and cut it off from its context (Rome Declaration), whether in the prevalent rhetoric of international organizations or the practices of mega companies, international trade relations, and national economic and agricultural policies that follow prevailing neoliberal doctrines. This is the case with most international documents that stipulate a minimum balance of interest between multiple stakeholders and countries with different levels of development, which is often expressed in UN documents and conventions. One of the characteristics of UN documents and orientations is the ability of an interested party to interpret them in a manner that benefits personal interest or policies by focusing on one element without the other; even if this strays away from the logic and purpose of the document, as interpreted by another party. This is exactly what happened to the Rome Declaration and the concept of food security in its original format, which is in harmony with said Declaration. Although the latter requires policies to comply with food security requirements (the seven commitments and the overall text of the Declaration), the wording of the Declaration does not clearly and decisively indicate the content of the policies required. This is almost impossible in international negotiations.

The text is committed to combating poverty and inequality, but it does not, for example, explicitly indicate that global trade policies and the commodification of food contribute to poverty and inequality. Thus, we find that stakeholders will therefore focus on certain elements of the concept concept - in this case food security - at the expense of others, and present the policies they adopt as being capable of achieving the objective in the course of this process, the same objective is reformulated by “technical and neutral” diction that isolates required alternative policies in favor of prevailing policies. In this sense, “food security” is defined by purely technical elements, such as availability, access, continuity and quality; while all other elements most relevant to particular policies are obscured (combating poverty and inequality, rural development, protection of small-scale producers, sustainable agricultural practices, etc.) which are necessary and mandatory for achieving the objective (food security).

In this sense, the sterile and reformulated concept of “food security” loses its depth and actual meaning, and becomes feasible by several means, first and foremost of which is the market. Instead of seeking adequate food supply for all through the systems of agricultural and industrial production of each concerned country, the issue morphs into food availability through importing from international markets. This stipulates a different form of economic and agricultural policies, which prioritize the provision of foreign currency resources to finance imports, and shift the requirements of the national production process - agricultural and other - to serve the purpose of providing foreign currency resources (allocated for export agriculture and import of primary foods). From the sterilized perspective of “food security” one sees only the transaction between producing and importing. While from a rights or development perspective there is a fundamental difference. And this is at the heart of the rise of the concept of food sovereignty.

The papers of Mahjoub-Belghith, Riachi and Martinello (as well as other papers) dealt in detail and from different angles with the concept of food sovereignty, comparing it to the concept of food security/safety. They all share a common root explaining the emergence of this concept, which first appeared in 1996 at the World Food Summit in Rome, where La Via Campesina, a cross-country umbrella for peasant organizations from around the world, introduced food sovereignty as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable and equitable food systems and their right to define their own food and agriculture. (La Via Campesina 1996).” This was during the CSO forum parallel to the official summit, reflecting a more radical position of civil society organizations than a formal government summit (as is customary at international conferences). This happens in part due to insufficient resources or lack of sufficient clarity and avoidance of specifying policies that contribute to achieving developmental trends.
objectives. And perhaps more importantly are the practices following such summits, which often cater for the strong stakeholders, such as mega companies and the private sector. These summits are open to interpretation and more often than not adopt the interpretations and explanations of these stakeholders of the summit’s recommendations. The World Food Summit held in 1996 attempted to deal with the major problems caused by national and international agricultural patterns. The summit also addressed problems of food trade, and utilizing food as a weapon in international political confrontations, in order to lobby both big and small states. Moreover, the summit tackled food shortages and famine brought about by wars, disasters, and lack of democracy in light of deteriorating political administration in countries that are primarily responsible for these circumstances, including during wars and disasters (as demonstrated by Amartya Sen)⁶.

In light of the practices that followed the Food Summit in 1996, and the continuous political crises and policies that are inconsistent with food security requirements, a number of relevant agricultural, women’s, environmental and development movements met again in Nylénen in 2007, and developed the concept of food sovereignty in its current format. The aim was to restore the role of politics in achieving food security. Food sovereignty was presented as an alternative to the technical and sterile concept of “food security”, with all the actual practices that made this concept an integral part of the rhetoric of neoliberal politics. Food security is viewed with little to no distinction from commodifying food, destroying local agricultural systems, changing food patterns, dumping policies, and promoting unsustainable agricultural practices, as well as using harmful agricultural medicine, seeds, and genetically modified products, etc. In short, it is the use of the “technical and impartial” rhetoric to promote the interests of mega companies and strong stakeholders, in stark contrast to what should have happened following the adherence to the Rome Declaration.

Thus, the concept of food sovereignty stresses on:

- The right to freely choose the agricultural policies of each country.
- Protection of small scale farmers from the harmful effects of world trade.
- Obstruction of dumping policies.
- Facing the structural change of world prices.
- Adhering to the principles of sustainable agriculture.
- Right to refuse unsuitable practices, technologies, and genetically modified products.

In this context, the concept of food sovereignty was developed as a struggle path for peasant and civil organizations. These organizations view the sterile and technical concept of “food security” as unfit to provide an analytical and practical framework for facing food problems on both the national and international levels, as well as the individual and familial levels. Food sovereignty comes to reestablish the connection between achieving food security and the policies required to achieve it. Hence, food sovereignty becomes the path to achieving food security and right to food.

4. Food Security and Human Security

The three concepts that the report deals with – right to food, food security, and food sovereignty- are elements of the development thought system, often adopted by varying developmental civil movements. The papers attempt to link this conceptual trilogy to the concept of development with all its branches. There is also a sort of link or similarity between the concept of food security, and human security. We have previously pointed out the inaccuracy of the Arabic translation of food security, preferring the translation of food security instead. This also applies to the translation into Arabic of human security, opting to use the more accurate translation of human safety. We will henceforth use human safety to point to said concept (as reported in the 1994 Human Development Report and used widely afterwards).

There are two points of resemblance between food security and human security. The first is that human safety includes seven elements, one of which is food security (see Mahjoub-Belghith paper). Hence, it is part of the whole and does not contradict the concept and approach of food security. The second point of similarity is that the concept of human safety shifted the focus from state security/ safety to individual and familial safety (it took it to the people), and from the concept of military and police security to safety of individuals lives in various fields, starting from personal safety, to safeguarding freedoms, to health and food security, etc. (this is a strong motive to shift focus from the term security to safety). The same applies to the concept of food security, where interest resides in food security for people (individuals and families), rather than food security for states.

The weak point of this shift is that it focuses on the concept of food security on individuals and families without including safety of social/demographic groups and people’s safety. In the practices of this approach, the individual-familial side prevails over the collective-social aspect, leaving a gap in the way of formulating necessary policies for achieving food security: and, it is incapable of addressing comprehensive national and global policies. Thus, this link seems to lack the dimension that ties rights and development together.

5. Food Security and Right to Development

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986 defined development as a social, economic, cultural, political and legal process. It stressed that the right to development belongs to all individuals and peoples, everywhere, without discrimination and with their participation. The Declaration recognizes the right to self-determination and to full sovereignty over natural wealth and resources. The right to self-determination embodies both the political dimension (political independence, sovereignty and freedom from occupation) and the socio-economic dimension; that is the right of all states and peoples to freely and democratically decide the social and economic pattern of development that best fits their interests without external pressure, and to have sovereignty over their natural resources⁶.

Linking the triad of food concepts to right to development is consistent with the concepts of development, rights-safety- and food sovereignty. Both have a rights-based perspective which is a pivotal point. Moreover, this enables the right to food to be incorporated in the right to development, and grants individuals, groups, peoples, and states the right to food, and the right to develop with healthy food policies that express their national choices. It also gives states the right to formulate economic and social policies and exercise democratic control, including agricultural and food resources. It stands to reason that there can be no independent food policies without independent socio-economic policies. Therefore, national priority and the right to freely chart national development policies without foreign duress is the framework/environment conducive of enacting food policies on the basis of the aforementioned food sovereignty.

6. Right to Food and 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda is an international agenda for achieving a broad range of goals that contribute to sustainable (human) development. The Agenda constitutes an indivisible unit in terms of its logic and guiding principles, and in terms of the interdependence of the synergistic outcomes towards the overall goal of the Agenda, which is to transform our world through inclusive development. It is formulated - as the Agenda notes - from a rights perspective and is a line of action for human rights work in various fields.

The Mahjoub-Belghith document demonstrates the relation between food and the Agenda (see document). In this regard, the agenda includes a special goal on hunger and food security, which is the second goal. Furthermore, the topic of food occurred in general in the declaration, and in specific in goal 24, which tackled food security (See Mahjoub paper). In this context, it is important to highlight the following points:

- In keeping with the logic of the agenda and with the development-rights logic, the second objective should not be cut out of its context and should be part of an indivisible agenda, lest we make the same mistake we mentioned in the preceding dealings with the agenda and with the triangle of food concepts that are the subject of the report.
- Allocating a special goal for food security

⁶ See papers on concept and development of food sovereignty. What appears here is a summary, while the new addition is for the sake of context, analysis and linking concepts.

⁵ See Declaration on the Right to Development. The question of sovereignty over natural resources is also mentioned in the documents of many other international conferences, albeit sporadically.
denotes its ever growing importance on the global level as compared to the past decade and previous declaration text (the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) phase, where the fight against hunger was limited to combating extreme poverty). This indicates that the food crisis has become more of a priority, whether because of wars and food crises associated with it, or because of the 2007 world food price crisis and again in 2011, which was related to agricultural policies in major countries, competition over food markets, and the role of the pricing system. In short, economy and trade was behind prioritizing food security, as reflected in the Agenda’s goal.

- The second goal of sustainable development has economic, environmental, health, and social aspects. This expresses the compound nature of food security. Two main points prevail in the second goal; the first is the agricultural-environmental aspect, which relates to the social dimension of small scale producers and farmers. The second is the economic aspect, related to trade relations, support policies, investment, etc., in the agricultural field, market stability and food prices.

- The three policy targets of the goal are all related to policies (target A on investment, target B on trade and deregulation, and target C on market and price stability). While the goal generally stresses on the social dimension (poverty, health, small scale producers) and the environmental dimension (sustainable practices), its wording remains vague on which policies can achieve environmental and social commitments. We have already mentioned this characteristic in the drafting of international documents. In this particular case, the elimination of price distortions and the removal of subsidies include large exporting countries as well as developing countries. For instance, the targets do not clearly indicate that sustainable agricultural practices require avoiding genetically modified products; or that the contribution of food security to combating poverty, inequality and improving health and food quality requires structural adjustment in national food systems, which have often been imposed from abroad over many decades.

Hence, the content of the second goal can be interpreted differently among owners of companies and agricultural investments, and between peasant movements and human rights and civil organizations. The same goes for the policies that should be adopted to achieve said goal. The silver lining for rights-civil activists is that the compound nature of the second goal is distinct from the technical and sterile concept of food security. Whereby said goal, even in isolation from other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is primarily tied to policies. Both the Agenda and the second goal can be used to argue against reducing food security through partial and isolated actions at the individual and familial levels, and to push for encompassing all deep and complex meanings the goal carries in its objective form. This is supported by the 2030 Agenda and the format of the second SDG.

### 7. From a Singular Concept to a Package of Concepts

Shifting from partial dealing with singular concepts to tackling a system of concepts necessitates a reproduction of the singular concepts in order to compliment the other concepts. This can be achieved through, first, rewording the singular concept beyond its narrow and sterile interpretability; and, second, by tracking it back to its original context and surrounding it to a common root and framework. These concepts should be collectively included in a common rights-development framework.

The three concepts- right to food, food security/safety, and food sovereignty, are often presented as contrasting and conflicting concepts—especially the concepts of food security and food sovereignty. This indicates that the second goal is fundamentally about the interconnection and hierarchy, while keeping a pragmatic perspective that benefits civil society intervention, coalition-building, broadening the scope of campaign participants, and bolstering abilities of participants in national, regional, and international dialogue on this issue.

### Reproducing the Concept of Food Security/Safety

A critical analysis of food security was presented earlier, describing it as partial, sterile, and out of the context of the Rome Declaration. It was also suggested that the Arabic translation forgoes the term food security for the sake of the more accurate translation of food security. This change in choice of words is more faithful to the ethos of the Rome Declaration, and qualifies food security to positively interact with the other two concepts of right to food and food sovereignty. This change in wording embodies what occurred in article one of the Rome Declaration, and can be considered beyond its narrow and sterile interpretability; and, in a manner that clarifies this idea (see paper). This comparison can be summed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Sovereignty</th>
<th>food security</th>
<th>Right to Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A concept linked to the dedication of the right to food to other rights, and an alternative political project.</td>
<td>A neutral and technical concept according to its supporters, and biased to the neoliberal economy, according to its opponents.</td>
<td>A comprehensive multidimensional legal / rights concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an evaluation has its basis in the “technical and partial” nature of some concepts (particularly food security, according to the report’s logic). This creates a conflict between them. It is also presented in the prevailing practices and policies in the fields of agriculture and food, which have failed to address food problems over the past decades, while modern and previously unknown problems emerged. An additional factor is to be noted, which is that conflict arises from fragmenting these concepts from their context. This magnifies the elements of contradiction among them at the expense of what can be considered a margin of integration in practice, which is needed in social dialogues and in policy-making.

The following segments attempt to recapitulate the three concepts in an effort to shed light on their interconnection and hierarchy, while keeping a pragmatic perspective that benefits civil society intervention, coalition-building, broadening the scope of campaign participants, and bolstering abilities of participants in national, regional, and international dialogue on this issue.

### Reproducing the Concept of Food Security/Safety

A critical analysis of food security was presented earlier, describing it as partial, sterile, and out of the context of the Rome Declaration. It was also suggested that the Arabic translation forgoes the term food security for the sake of the more accurate translation of food security. This change in choice of words is more faithful to the ethos of the Rome Declaration, and qualifies food security to positively interact with the other two concepts of right to food and food sovereignty. This change in wording embodies what occurred in article one of the Rome Declaration, and can be considered beyond its narrow and sterile interpretability; and, in a manner that clarifies this idea (see paper). This comparison can be summed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Sovereignty</th>
<th>food security</th>
<th>Right to Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A concept linked to the dedication of the right to food to other rights, and an alternative political project.</td>
<td>A neutral and technical concept according to its supporters, and biased to the neoliberal economy, according to its opponents.</td>
<td>A comprehensive multidimensional legal / rights concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table demonstrates that once the Rome Declaration is noted in the definition of food security, the requirements for national, regional, and international policies become evident. This goes beyond any narrow and technical interpretations of food security, which try to segregate it from the policies essential to its achievement. In this context, the reformulated concept of “food security”, in accordance with the Rome Declaration, is eligible to complement the concept of food sovereignty, as the sharp contrast between the two is eliminated.

Is Food Sovereignty the Ideal Concept?

Crisis of food sovereignty view the term itself as a slippery slope, as it is outdated and could be interpreted as a call for retreat and isolation from the world, and the refusal to interact positively with globalization and its manifestations, especially integration in the global economy. The term “sovereignty” also denotes a traditional view of national and global relations, recalling a time before the 1980s. Another pitfall to the term is that it has a state (and governmental) connotation. While food security took a step forward in restating importance to individuals and families rather than states, the concept of sovereignty grants priority to state and its citizens and people (especially individuals and families). It also blurs individuals into a vague collective, that is the people who constitute the state at best, in addition to state-country and its institutions that assume food sovereignty over individuals. In the end, food sovereignty is a macro-concept, much like macro economy, that neglects individuals and families.

However, this is not the intention of the creators and supporters of food sovereignty, as explained by Belghith. The intention is to overcome the purely technical approach to food security and restore due regard to macro and sectoral policies that allow the realization of the right to food for all in the context of sustainability and development of human rights. The creators of the concept emphasize freedom of choice for individuals and peoples, sustainability, and that achieving food security (or food security) requires radically different alternative policies and options from the ones adopted by neoliberal globalization in this area, which employs various theories and concepts, including food security. To summarize, the concept of food sovereignty is a political-ideological retaliation to the neoliberal ideology of food security. While the latter claims to be impartial towards neoliberal policies (among others), no evidence sustains its claim.

Nevertheless, there is a point to criticizing the concept of food sovereignty that should not be overlooked. It is difficult to separate the term (food) sovereignty from the state approach, which supports rights of other states. This is evident in their insistence on participation, democracy, sustainability, freedom, etc. These characteristics must be available on the national level in order for national sovereignty to be a free and democratic expression of the people’s choices, rather than the choices of the governing elite. This has yet to be realized in developing countries and in our countries and all these righteous qualities remain theoretical wishes, while food sovereignty remains in the hands of governments and powerful parties within the country.

The actual meaning of “food sovereignty” is the existence of a balance among the levels and dimensions of the food system. The process of realizing the right to development can be simplified as follows:

1. Balance between national food production and its availability through fair trade
2. Balance between the needs of food producers and consumers
3. Balance between the internal economic cycle of production, exchange, and consumption and that of regional and global economies
4. Balance between domestic food trade, production, and consumption
5. Balance between meeting food needs at the lowest cost and unsustainable agricultural practices (extremely intense agriculture, over-use of agricultural lands and subjugating them to trade logic, unreasonable use of pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified products, destruction of traditional farming patterns and associated knowledge, etc.), which threaten the sustainability of the right to food for future generations.

Advocators of this concept may add further advantages to it. However, the main concern of food sovereignty, much like rights concept, is development. It can be summarized as follows:

1. Peoples and states have the right to freely choose their food systems. Food systems designed to promote the products of major companies that control world production must not be imposed upon peoples and...
The people have the right to chart national policies and acquire suitable regional and national cooperation in a manner that achieves right to food for all.

2. The right to food encompasses individuals, families, social groups and peoples on the basis of the principle of right, justice and non-discrimination;

3. The realization of this right and the achievement of food security cannot be accomplished without appropriate policies, and said policies differ fundamentally from prevailing policies, which favour giant companies and major exporting countries that dominate the global markets;

4. Despite globalization, or rather because of globalization, the national level is essential to confront the current unjust and unsustainable trends - hence the term sovereignty - with an emphasis on domestic democracy;

5. Commitment to the requirements of sustainability is key to food sovereignty, in contrast to common practices that are governed by trade and profit.

The four points are in harmony with the components of the right to development, as it appeared in the Universal Declaration on the Right to Development (1986). However, the fifth point is novel and more in tune with the modern development rhetoric. It is to be noted that this point is not exclusive to food sovereignty. However, reservation remains with respect to the appropriateness of the term itself (sovereignty), which remains relatively unsuccessful given its state-inspired allusions, and is not mitigated by the ratio of the many positive attributes of the concept. This reservation exists regardless of its use by critics of the concept from the perspective of their support for neoliberal policies; the reason behind this reservation is certainly different. The content and context of food sovereignty is similar to the right to development concept, according to the 1986 declaration. And this similarity can develop the concept to resemble the original idea behind its creation and use. Perhaps the term should be revised and revisited.

Conclusion: Interconnected Concepts Pack

The preceding paragraphs presented what we called the first phase of reformulating/producing individual key concepts. What is presented in the following paragraphs is the second phase, which examines the interrelationships between the three concepts of right to food – food security - food sovereignty, and puts them within the framework of the human rights - development system. The phrasing takes into account the need to use simple diction, as much as possible, for non-specialists, while allowing civil organizations and individual activists to use the report to develop their capacity in this area, or to strengthen their capacity to plan and intervene in the field of the right to food, and to ally themselves with organizations and networks that are directly concerned or specialized in the subject.

The general idea we adopt is that the right to food is a basic principle that should form a framework for the general principles that guide policies. It is also a final end that should be achieved, since right to food is a basic right that is tightly knotted to right to life. The concept of food security/security represents the specified goals that need to be achieved in order to fulfil this right. This concept and its technical content (availability, access, continuity, and quality) should be viewed as requirements that are part of the broader commitments outlined in the Rome Declaration. The concept of food sovereignty, which we view in a context similar to the concept of the right to development (1986) of which it is a part, essentially includes policies and guidelines for practical interventions leading to food security and the right to food. Food sovereignty is a concept and framework for a broad coalition of peasant, civil, women’s, and human rights movements, etc., committed to working for alternative options to neoliberal policies, not only due to ideological differences, but also due to negative and sometimes catastrophic results that these prevailing policies have yielded. These policies are the pivotal reason behind crises in the last decades.

In this context, the report calls for a special reading of the three concepts, as summarized in the following table:

Comparing the two concepts from a traditional and an alternative approach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Traditional Approach (technical and fragmented)</th>
<th>Alternative Approach (integrative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right to food</td>
<td>- Viewed in a singular way</td>
<td>- It is an expression of the right to life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Does not necessarily mean commitment to the entire rights system</td>
<td>Full commitment to the human rights system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Does not necessarily mean commitment to the human rights approach, especially its binding nature, and not committed to the approach of those with rights and those with duties.</td>
<td>Emphasis on the obligation to commit to the human rights approach, and identify those responsible for its implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security/safety</td>
<td>- Uses the concept of food security</td>
<td>- We suggest using the concept of food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Technical and fragmented and isolates itself from policies</td>
<td>Incorporates the concept in the context of the Rome Declaration and links it to other obligations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cares about individuals and families and neglects groups and people</td>
<td>Cares about all levels and groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food sovereignty</td>
<td>- It cannot be included in this approach</td>
<td>- Pays attention to policies as actual means to achieving food security and the right to food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Formulales alternative approach, content and practices to the food policies derived from neoliberal globalization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cycle of policies and execution: this cycle begins in a general way, which sets the framework for the ultimate goal (right to food concept), and moves towards specifying the sub-goals (concept of food security), and finally the cycle reaches the means to achieving it via policies. And here the concept of food sovereignty comes in, which its supporters view as most consistent with the end goal – right to food, and the most capable of achieving the specific goals (food security).

1. The cycle of policies and execution: this cycle deals with planning and practical intervention to achieve goals and targets and yield desired results (right to food). And here the effect is reversed; after clarifying the theoretical framework and goals, the path to fulfilling them starts with policies and intervention (food sovereignty), and leads up to achieving the final end which is realizing the right to development.

2. The cycle of policies and execution: this cycle deals with planning and practical intervention to achieve goals and targets and yield desired results (right to food). And here the concept is reversed; after clarifying the theoretical framework and goals, the path to fulfilling them starts with policies and intervention (food sovereignty), and leads up to achieving the final end which is realizing the right to development.

The charts below offer a visual explanation to the cognitive and policy cycles.

Another point to note is that neither right to food, nor food security or the policies inspired from food sovereignty occur in vacuum. They are not a “sector” isolated from macroeconomic and developmental policies, whether their orientations are consistent with the human rights-development system, which we adopt, or are shaped by policies governed by the logic of economic growth and profit in accordance with prevailing neoliberal economic doctrines. Food policies and all that is connected to it are a necessary part of the whole.

The report, thus far, has linked between the triad of food concepts and (sustainable human development), along with the concepts of human safety, right to development, and the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, this triad is organically linked to justice and equality, including equitable development or socially balanced development (poor, rich, middle class), geographically (rural and urban) and balanced sectoral development (industry, agriculture, services, other sectors . . .), based on the size of the institution or economic activity (large, medium, small, micro . . .), and according to cultural lifestyles (family farming and associated lifestyles, food preferences . . .) and between generations (sustainability) . . . etc. Also at the heart of this is the gender dimension, where women have a major role to play in agriculture, food production and preparation for consumption. Women are often affected by the negative repercussions of globalization and intensive farming policies, which are governed by the rules of profit, trade, and export above all other considerations.

In this context, diverse civil society organizations, peasant movements and activists in various fields of work, note in their theoretical framework, as in the course of analyzing, planning and designing interventions, the constant incorporation of the issues of right to food and other related global issues with their theoretical and practical dimensions alike. They do not isolate the course of action for the right to food from the course of action for development. The following chart offers a simplified visual representation:

Rights-development system- goals and specific outputs, free choices for people/peoples- policies and priorities (2030 Agenda)

Introduction: The emergence of agriculture

The ability to absorb food and convert it into energy to ensure survival and regeneration / reproduction is one of the first characteristics of living matter. If nutrition in its primitive shape takes the form of direct absorption from the ocean, it has become a more complex biochemical process with plants, and then with animal species that seek food through their mobility. Then the natural aspect (bio-chemical) was mixed with the social side, as fire and the various tools used in hunting, cooking and primitive storage mediated between prehistoric humans and the food available in the surrounding environment. And since humans are social animals, social organization was a determining factor in food patterns and behaviors, which was a social process both in production and consumption alike, and many cultures were associated with it (from magic rituals, religious sacrifices, and prohibition and permission).

In summation, the food process accompanied mankind since the emergence of civilization and before. It is a social process that forms an organic element to the societal formation and its economic, social, cultural, and power-relation rules. Furthermore, the discovery of agricultural- in which women had a critical role - was a necessary prelude to the stability of ancient human societies in permanent villages, and the development of physical, symbolic and relational tools accompanying this stability.
is one of the most food dependent countries on global markets, including Europe. This proves that agriculture and food are at the core of the socio-economic system and national and international power relations; it is an integral part of these relations. The industrial revolution played a critical role in relations between north and south. It shifted the standards, making northern states self-sufficient exporting countries; while, southern countries—especially Arab states—turned into purely importing countries for foodstuffs. This occurred during the colonial period and physical occupation of lands, as well as in the later stages of globalization and dominance through investment, trade, and changing national food patterns. It even materialized through the acquisition of lands when the need arises.

1. Colonial Practices

The colonial phase required the direct occupation of lands and subjugation of its inhabitants, while directly looting its resources, including food sources, in a dual operation. The first aspect of this operation is exporting products to be consumed in colonizing countries, stripping colonized countries from control over their resources; this manifests itself in the second aspect, where colonized countries become importers of all their food needs from the colonized a complete reformulation of agricultural ties and systems, and reflected on the power relations as well as socio-economic and political prowess in favor of colonizers and those conflict with them. This created major problems with land ownership, agriculture, and social relations in rural areas, as well as in relations between rural and urban areas and metropolitan countries. Arab countries should have tackled these problems, albeit in varying degrees depending on the colonial nature, duration and epoch. The effects and repercussions of this era did not disappear when independence was achieved, but stayed for many years and continue to exist. National studies on this matter bring to light three cases, which are Algeria, Tunisia, and Palestine.

Algeria was under French settler colonialism for 130 years (from 1830 to 1962). Palestine is the only example of direct settler colonialism in the modern era; living embodiment of the types of practices that were prevalent in different formulas during the colonial phase in all Arab countries, to varying degrees from one country to the next. Israeli practices represent an extreme case even when compared to the colonial phases in the first half of the 20th century. These practices are taking place during the age of globalization, and under the gaze of the world nations and the human rights system, and in the presence of widely available technology and science.

The Palestinian case demonstrates the importance of food sovereignty, without which food security/safety is undermined even in the narrow sense that encompasses families and individuals. The right to food for individuals and families is also undermined. A percentage of families/inhabitants suffer from lack of food security (they do not have a constant supply of food). This percentage rises to... in Gaza. Concerning central control of Palestinian authorities over land, water, and food resources- that is food sovereignty- this concept specifically does not apply in any shape or form to the situation of the state, authority and people alike. The state itself lacks sovereignty; it does not represent the traditional meaning of state and authority. The occupying forces are primarily and specifically responsible for lack of food and right to food, regardless of the efficiency of what can be considered the Palestinian national authorities, their apparatuses, plans and the soundness of their policies. We are at a phase that precedes the ability to chart and evaluate national and food policies. The Palestinian authorities are constrained by the occupation and lack of sovereignty over resources. As the Palestinian document surmised, the right to food is a right to land and nation. This is clearly evident in the following (see Palestinian paper):

The adjoining of the two economies and agricultural systems in each of the occupying state of Israel and the Palestinian State, and the full compliance of Palestinian agriculture to the requirements of the development of agriculture in the State of Israel, including settlements. Israeli agricultural system is advanced and highly productive as it enjoys wide international support. In contrast, Palestinian agriculture has denied the simplest rights of capabilities: controlling the land, dividing spatial domain, controlling foreign trade, and controlling water. It is also subjected to military constraints that forbid it from using suitable lands for security reasons. Moreover, cheap Palestinian labor is exploited for agricultural work in the settlements, etc.

Controlling water is one of the key factors to this process. "Israel controls Palestinian water and its distribution. It controls %90 of shared water resources and hinders the ability of Palestinians to benefit from the remaining 10%, which is of great importance to our lives. They deal with a complicated system of attaining permits from the joint water committee with Israeli consent and the approval of the Israeli army only, where the Palestinians can implement water related projects in the lands of the Palestinian state. This hinders the execution of the simplest water related projects, such as: drilling artesian wells and rainwater harvesting wells in the regions.

• Dumping the Palestinian market with subsidized Israeli agricultural commodities, in parallel with limiting the free movement of agricultural goods, individuals and services on the Palestinian side, as well as confiscating agricultural lands and uprooting trees, especially olive trees, which span over half of the arable lands in Palestine and are the main economic resource for Palestinian families working in the Palestinian agriculture sector. And forbidding shepherds and cattle owners from accessing grazing sources.

Colonialism and Occupation: Summary

Israeli practices today represent a model of similar practices dating back to the colonial period in other Arab countries. Israeli practices brought desires of large companies and foreign and national investors to seek control over land, water resources and agriculture in a model without necessarily being able to achieve it. However, considering the distribution of water resources between agriculture allocated for internal consumption and the share of small scale farmers indicates a significant imbalance in favor of major investments in agricultural exports. The same goes for land acquisition including agricultural investments in other states, where a systematic destruction of resources and rural lifestyles occurs, and thousands of agricultural workers are employed on farms whose production is entirely exported to another country. This is a novel and innovative form of "colonial economic occupation" of the best agricultural lands, under the protection of the complicit national state that has no practical sovereignty over its resources. The concept of food sovereignty manifests in all its socio-political and national dimensions in this pattern of relations. It clearly shows that
food sovereignty—in such cases—is a necessary precondition for achieving food security and the right to food, and even to provide food to citizens in its most basic form.

2. Colonial legacy: Other examples

Prior to national independence, colonizing countries used to directly determine methods of dealing with the land and agricultural policies, including a full control over the country. This caused structural changes in agriculture and food whose effects have continued after independence. National papers present this in the case of each country.

In Tunisia, the authorities of the French occupation confiscated large areas of land and granted them to French settlers, depriving Tunisian peasants and farmers of their livelihoods. After the independence, these lands were not returned to their owners and were not included in any such plan for agricultural development, cooperative enhancement or other formulation, but often remained classified as state owned land, or forest lands. In the latter case-forest lands-investment is not allowed; and in case of state ownership, the government rents out the lands to individuals close to authority-private sector-often very cheaply. One special case stands alone where the local population regained their right to cooperatively benefit from El Waha, which was leased by the state to individuals, through right to food, and even to provide food to citizens in its most basic form.

In other countries, colonial authorities imposed a monoculture pattern in the service of their industries and markets, such as cotton in Egypt, vines in Algeria or the breeding of silkworms dedicated to silk production in Lebanon. In the Lebanese case, the last decades of Ottoman domination over Lebanon (and the Levant) witnessed a rise in the influence of European countries, especially France. Silkworms were encouraged to produce silk in Mount Lebanon to supply the textile factories in Lyon (France). Soon after, new products replaced silk, which led to a rapid collapse in silkworm breeding in Lebanon and the consequent deterioration of farmers’ conditions, and the indiscriminate transition to other crops, especially fruits (including apples), which transformed to the new agricultural products during the period of independence, before they deteriorated in turn. This deterioration is mainly due to the lack of development of quality and new species. The rise and collapse of silk production in Lebanon affected overall socio-economic changes and roused waves of migration, and contributed to Lebanon’s later economic transition to trade and services (of course, among others). But this is a clear example of adapting agricultural (and economic) policies in the service of dominant foreign states, and the resulting far-reaching structural changes.

Third Axis: General Conclusions: What to Do?

This report was prepared by a civil developmental network with various areas of work and interests. In addition to the cognitive goal, its authors implore its use as a tool of analysis and action that helps interventionists to approach the issue of the right to food from an integrative perspective and in the context of options to policies that help achieve the goals. This report also helps create a common knowledge base that facilitates convergence of views and allows for the creation of coalitions between NGOs and trade unions across different disciplines, in order to form a broad common path among different categories of civil society organizations away from the narrow sectoral and specialized logic.

The last part of the presentation—General Conclusions: What to Do?—is based on the theoretical section of the report and the presentation of concepts on the one hand; it is also based on the expertise, problems, and experiences included in national presentations, on the other hand. The analysis process places the three food concepts—right to food, food security, and food sovereignty—at the center of attention for the sake of respecting the reader’s choices and preferences. It also draws from the totality of the presentations and overall analysis of the factors / sources that pressure the realization of the right to food and food security through policies that are committed to the orientation of food sovereignty.

Figure 3 Factors stressing the realization of the right to food

4. The absence of good governance and democracy globally and nationally.
5. “Natural” and man-made environmental pressures, both global and national.
6. Neglecting appropriate scientific research, and weakness of national capacities.

The diagram summarizes these factors, which will be addressed in turn, and alternative policies will be suggested from the perspective of realizing the right to food and food security through policies that are committed to the orientation of food sovereignty.
responsible for exacerbating problems of poverty and inequality, and creating large imbalances between economic sectors. During the colonial phase, food dependency relations were drawn with developing countries through a set of policies and procedures sometimes imposed through direct force. Recently independent states had to bear the weight of a dual agriculture/cultivation: cash-export crops often irrigated, with medium to high yields; traditional, low-yielding, often un-irrigated crops cultivated in small areas by small scale farmers. The methods of reproducing this current food dependency take place through the following channels:

- The continuous impact of inherited structural dependency status and exploitation of the urgent need for food that cannot be postponed
- Global trade control over major crops used in nutrition, or export crops earmarked for the provision of hard currency in developing countries.
- Control over world market prices through trade mechanisms and trade and economic agreements.
- Control over the relative prices between different products in favor against small farmers' products and products intended for national consumption in order to heighten dependency.
- Acquisition of high quality lands by investors or "companies" of states or in poor countries at the expense of the latter's food security and sovereignty.
- The food aid system in the past and present in some countries, especially those suffering from wars and crises.

This packet of policies and channels can only be achieved on the basis of (dependent) alliance between private and governmental international parties, and national private companies under government sponsorship or partnership, including the government's commitment to providing all guarantees in order to facilitate the work of the globalized private sector through legislation, signing of agreements, and even corrupt and repressive practices, and the absence of democratic participation sometimes required for land grabbing. The axes of confronting these policies- by the networks of civil society organizations regionally and nationally require:

Comprehensive pressure to adopt alternative development policies to current neoliberal policies, including regional and national policies, and to ensure that food sovereignty and food security are at the core of this alternative.

- Building a broad coalition to revise trade agreements with international parties, and working on enforcing civil society participation composed of representatives of rural areas, peasants, small scale farmers, cash industries both small and medium scale, women, agricultural colleges, agricultural research, and workers in the fields of health, food, and combating poverty, cooperatives, and consumer associations in any dialogue concerning agricultural agreements and food.
- Transforming this coalition to a major civil actor lobbying political policies in this domain, with constant and pressing interaction with agricultural plans, and ministries of agriculture, irrigation, health, and social affairs, along with other institutions concerned with food.
- Working on the equitable distribution of water resources in scientific and sustainable manner, and eliminating the imbalance in consumption of water resources and others on limited irrigated lands designated for export crops at the expense of other lands.
- Reestablishing a balance between export products and products for local consumption, in favor of the latter; and, reversing a balance between livestock production and associated feed production and plant production, particularly for human consumption, thereby reducing imports.
- Rationally regulating lands in terms of use and reducing the decline of agricultural land in favor of urbanization and land speculation, and attending to the reform of the soil condition and limiting the deterioration of its quality.
- Limiting land acquisition by foreign parties in favor of sophisticated cooperative and non-cooperative forms of national investment designed to improve people's nutritional status and food sovereignty.
- Controlling dependency of domestic food prices on global pricing, and regulating relative domestic pricing among various products just for small scale farmers and consumers alike.

In light of this tangible analysis of the components and practices of this alliance in each country, the broad civil coalition for the right to food should take countermeasures in order to mitigate their negative impact and strengthen alternative policies and practices. Attention-for example- can be given to the following points:

- Pushing for the commitment of the private sector, especially large international and national companies, to environmental and social responsibility, and to guiding principles for the private sector's adherence to human rights wherever possible. Special emphasis might be given to approaches that limit crude practices or disrepect of the public opinion. Possible approaches are:
  1. Employing the social movement to confront the damage to farmers seasonal crops caused by damage or disrespecting the agricultural calendar.
  2. Choosing the approach of health and food security, which do not have the due respect of traders and manufacturers,
  3. Applying pressure by monitoring prices and imposing prices that are proportional to the actual income of citizens.
- Breaking the cycle of intermediaries that augments costs by supporting the creation of a network of productive, consumer and intermediate service cooperatives (inputs, storage and marketing); and building mechanisms for a direct relationship between the agricultural producer and the consumer, specifically between cities and surrounding rural areas.
- Developing the alliance with national small and medium agro-industries affected by the monopoly of the privileged few and are vulnerable to disappearance, especially those who support cooperation among producers and adhere to health and environmental standards. This component of the private sector, which constitutes the numerical majority, can be an effective ally of the civil movement for the right to food.
- Monitoring the national legislative framework and international obligations governing the work of companies in the agricultural and nutrition field; utilizing all available means to halt infringement of national sovereignty over resources and non-commercialized with health and environmental conditions, and to prevent dumping. These include the tools offered by international conventions, the mechanisms for reviewing the commitment to human rights, and monitoring development achievement in accordance with global agendas (most recently the 2030 Agenda and decrees on food and agriculture).
3. The Foreign and Domestic Dimensions of Wars, Occupation, and Conflicts

Wars and conflicts exacerbate the food crisis and problems of agriculture and land. They also create a special type of problems. Arab states that suffer from occupation (Palestine) or generalized wars involving external and internal parties (Yemen, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and formerly Iraq) have witnessed severe problems of famine and spread of disease due to contaminated water and malnutrition; this is most evident in Yemen where ...% of inhabitants suffer from malnutrition, and the cholera epidemic spread to ...% of the population. Moreover, in Syria low levels of poverty have increased considerably among the displaced and the refugees, whereby ...% of them suffer from malnutrition and extreme poverty. Food was used as a weapon of war in these countries through siege and starvation in order to force surrender.

Furthermore, the trade of essential foodstuffs by militias, gangs, and sometimes official bodies was also widespread. Agriculture in wide rural areas suffered the grunt of conflicts and military confrontations, and was polluted with landmines (as is the case of Lebanon after the Israeli hostilities), as well as other pollutants that result from the use of ammunition (such as Iraq and Syria). These rural areas also suffered from displacement of its labour force, which led to a comprehensive deterioration of agriculture and land care. All these factors have long lasting repercussions.

On the other hand, many benefit from war. The ever increasing need of refugees and inhabitants for food is met by the food aid offered by international organizations. This aid can play a role in increasing food dependency by injecting certain products to meet market needs, rather than supporting national products. The longer wars and conflicts go on, the higher the possibility that these injected products would become a necessity, even post war or post conflict. This is further asserted through trade and economic relations with importers of human aid. This aid may be provided through, inter alia, the use of national products of hosting countries (which is less harmful) or through contracts with private suppliers, particularly for basic foodstuffs that are usually imported in most countries. Networks of terrorists and armed groups and corrupt and conflict authorities have always found a way to parasitically benefit from this exceptional situation, including corruption and trafficking in food aid itself; the interests of these groups become an obstacle for achieving reconciliation and conflict resolution, because they view this as a threat to their livelihoods.

Facing off to this reality should include focusing on the following points:

- Disregarding the crucial role wars and conflicts play in violating the right to food, other factors also play a role in said infringement. Civil networks working on right to food take into consideration the structural factors that precede war and conflict. That is to avoid repeating similar policy patterns during the rebuilding phase post war and reconciliation. Exceptional and difficult circumstances require comprehensive visionary policies that are more effective than blaming war alone.
- There is often a schism between humanitarian intervention and developmental intervention. Most humanitarian interventions do not take into account the middle and far reaching effects of humanitarian and food aid, which often meet short term necessary needs without addressing the enabling and developmental dimensions. By contrast, the development approach requires a smart link between humanitarian and developmental intervention on the short, middle, and long terms, in order to evade future negative structural effects on agriculture and right to food, as well as negative effects on other sides of life for inhabitants and refugees, including hosting communities.

- Closely monitoring the humanitarian aid system, particularly in relation to food. An active participation of the civil society with international organizations, governmental bodies, and representatives of displaced people and refugees is required to halt corruption, trading with people’s food, and mismanagement of aid on all levels. These are common practices in such circumstances and involve all parties.

4. Absence of Democracy and Good Governance Globally and Nationally

The absence of democracy and justice in the global system is aggravating the food crisis by allowing a handful of companies and countries with political, military and economic power to control the world’s food, agriculture and trade. In contrast, developing countries and the world’s poor, including its small farmers, peasants and food consumers from the general public, are underrepresented in international institutions. Their ability to make their voices heard and influence decisions is virtually non-existent due to their disempowerment and monopoly of their already weak representation by governments that do not have independent decision-making capabilities, and these governments benefit from the proceeds of neoliberal globalization in many ways.

The situation is quite similar, if not worse, in many Arab countries at the national level. Constraints on democracy and freedoms are tight, and the work of civil society is not only inhibited, but also pursued and persecuted. The civil base of governance is narrow, and the spoils nature of the government prevails, where no law or constitution is respected. Tyranny and violent oppression are justified by various pretexts, such as security, stability, and combating terrorism. These situations expose many categories of citizens to vulnerabilities, especially inhabitants of rural areas, small scale farmers, and peasants. Interest is concentrated on main urban centers, especially the capitals, and the inhabitants of rich neighborhoods in particular. It is therefore not surprising that many of the previous agricultural reforms are relinquished - irrespective of when or how - since the building of national states after independence necessitated reliance on peasants and farmers as social forces upon which the regime was based in the period of revolutions and coups that led to national independence from mandates and direct colonization. However, the status quo was completely reversed, and traditional landlords have regained their land and influence (as they were included in reforms) and where joined by large capitalist agricultural investors, while the circumstances of small farmers and peasants deteriorated in almost all Arab countries, as shown in national papers.

These shifts in agriculture were not detached from transformation in the political and economic systems, as well as social alliances. Strengthening the status of agriculture responsive to sustainable human development and the right to food is also part of the political and institutional transformations / reforms in the governance system. In this regard, work can be done according to the following axes and levels:

- At the international level, bolstering the presence of farmers, food sovereignty, and environmental and development organizations in international mechanisms; building coalitions beyond narrow disciplines, and ratifying representation in relevant international organizations in accordance with SDG 16, for the sake of proposing and imposing alternatives with regard to food trade, prices and the rights of small agricultural producers, in compliance with the requirements of sustainability, justice and the realization of the right to food for all.
- At the regional level, actively involving agricultural unions, cooperatives and farmers movements in regional and national development networks, as they are marginalized even within civil society organizations. Ensuring the presence of representatives of these groups in specialized regional forums (environmental, agricultural and women) and public forums on human rights mechanisms and follow-up to 2030 Agenda ...), and making the cause of right to food a common cause for the general development.
- In the context of general political and institutional reforms, promoting democratic decentralization of control, especially in rural areas, and providing representation of peasants and farmers - especially women - in local bodies and municipal councils.
- Amending legislation for compulsory consultations with representatives of peasants, farmers, cooperatives and consumer associations, and enhancing their representation in economic, social (and environmental) councils, and mandating their consultation and participation in governmental and development projects funded by international agencies, which relate to food, agriculture and health.
- Preparing and adopting a code of conduct or guiding principles / rules, if applicable, containing environmental, health and social standards, to deal with matters relating to food production, trade and consumption.

Arab Watch
5. “Natural” and Man-Made Environmental Pressures, Globally and Nationally

The “natural” environment of natural pressures has receded with the development of human civilization. The “natural” interaction between humans and the surrounding nature used to happen in a commensurate manner, as humans lacked the tools and institutions to crucially affect natural attributes; humans would adapt to nature and slightly adjust its attributes. Agriculture is, perhaps, the first process of changing and transforming nature in the service of humans. Nature became a producer of food, and later other needs. Since ancient times, nature has become a compound of natural and human elements.

The modern age, which was hailed by the industrial revolution 300 years ago, witnessed a qualitative change, whereby the natural component in the environment was subjugated to and greatly affected by the human component. And perhaps the predominant single factor of this phenomenon is climate change, which was instigated by industrial growth and unsustainable behavior throughout the past centuries, up to our present time.

Unsustainable human practices, commanded by global neoliberalism today, placed humans in confrontation with nature. This man made vicious circle, from nature- to speak- which appears to seek vengeance against human behavior in the form of floods, heat waves, droughts, and hurricanes, etc.). This reaction cannot be construed as purely natural phenomena. Moreover, the negative effects of these reactions are not so much the product of their own nature as they are the result of the interaction between natural phenomena and people and their institutions. For instance, a flooding river is a natural phenomenon; but the disasters that ensue after the flood, such as destruction, victims, and famine, are primarily the result of cumulative human behavior, and the work of deficient institutions and policies. This distinction is necessary to avoid the “futuristic” approach intended to lift the cumulative historic responsibility off of those who caused this reality to materialize. It is also intended to lift current responsibility for the deficiency in addressing the effects of environmental degradation, and to avoid committing any policies that prevent the recurrence of such “disasters” on the grounds that they are the result of fate and nature.

Stemming from this approach, working to impose sustainable agricultural practices and ensure the right to food for all also requires action at the international and regional levels, as well as at the national and local levels. It encompasses the following axes:

- Upping both pressure and work on tackling climate change and its consequences, at a global level in particular, as a common task for all, not a country-specific luxury.
- The civil society’s approach should emphasize the historical cumulative responsibility of developed industrialized countries in the emergence and aggravation of climate change (and global warming). Said countries must assume full responsibility, and should bear the brunt of the cost of required policies to curb this phenomenon, as well as compensate affected developing states, and finance the bigger portion of funds, initiatives and research in this field, away from the logic of trade and gain. This is in keeping with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and putting it into practice.
- Participating in and contributing to global coalitions in order to enforce compliance with the Paris climate agreement, and to pressure countries that do not commit to it or want to withdraw from it. Halting environmental degradation should not be done through beguiling commercial solutions (such as selling pollution rights among states, or transferring polluting industries to different countries, etc.).
- On the regional level, the characteristics of the various «climatic and natural areas» in Arab countries (soil, terrain, water, climate, etc.) is pivotal for pressuring for sustainable agricultural and food policies, which do not create compulsory conflict between human activity and these characteristics, which can only lead to the depletion of resources and bad results.
- Observing the consequences of environmental pollution in the Arab region, especially those caused by wars and conflicts (mines, ammunition, depleted uranium, chronic soil degradation, land neglect, etc.). These sources deserve to be prioritized in Arab countries.
- Insisting on regional integration as a necessary - even mandatory - path to food security and food sovereignty, which is difficult to achieve at the level of individual countries. This should be part of a sustainable and equitable development framework that respects the rights of people and countries, rather than through the acquisition of land by private corporations or powerful countries at the expense of poor countries and the lifestyles of their people.

6. Neglect of Proper Scientific Research, and Weakness of National Capabilities

Scientific research, much like everything else, is being exploited by capital and employed to serve the logic of competition and gain. Hence, scientific research focuses on areas where possibility of gain is great, and prioritizes research that is congruent with the demands of globalization, markets, and big corporations that have replaced public (governmental) institutions as well as the neutral academy in many fields of research. It overlooks important issues for developing countries, including the development of research into, for example, certain tropical diseases that are not likely to be included in scientific research priorities. The same goes for relatively simple technological interests, which facilitate many aspects of the lives of citizens, including farmers and inhabitants of rural areas. These technologies enable transportation, acquiring necessities, and improving productivity inexpensively. No matter how sophisticated information technology (ICT) becomes, which today occupies the top of the research and development pyramid, it will never cultivate a wheat plain, bake a loaf of bread, or build a home. Moreover, genetic research is taking a dangerous turn, where genetic modifications are employed for malicious and destructive control over world agricultural production, undermining the food sovereignty of states and eradicating biological and genetic diversity, which is an irreparable loss. The development of robots and artificial intelligence is still in its infancy, and there is no sign to suggest that it will become a tool available to all, especially to the millions of producing and consuming people in the developing world, where the majority of the planet’s population resides.

This neglect and weakness is also present in developing countries, including Arab countries, where allocations for research and development are steadily dwindling and do not exceed...% of GDP.

There is also a prevalent culture of consumerism, wastefulness and profitability where scientific research has little value - except once again, where it serves the priorities of the ruling elite and their surroundings. Research into agriculture and agricultural policies that relate to agriculture, public health, and nutrition are considered second rate compared to other majors, such as business and commerce, telecommunications, engineering, business economics, specialized medicine, etc.

In this regard, the axes of civil networks working on the right to food can be summarized as follows:

- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.);
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- Contributing to global networks and coalitions that push for a balanced scientific research agenda that takes into account the needs and priorities of developing countries, the priorities of the agricultural sector and the availability of healthy food. And holding industrialized countries responsible for funding scientific research on sustainable agriculture, under climate change contexts.
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
- On the Arab level, promoting regional cooperation among Arab countries in the field of agricultural research with national capacities, through South-South cooperation and with the support of relevant organizations (UN, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.)
practices and products, especially in the media, schools and public institutions, and focusing on linking poor eating habits to health deterioration (obesity and overweight, nutrition-related diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc.).

The following diagram summarizes the main axes of work and their orientation (partially) in confronting the previously discussed six factors/sources that affect and pressure the right to food as a cradle of food security and food sovereignty alike.

Diagram...: Axes of intervention and work orientation to face pressing factors on right to food