

POLICY DOCUMENT

# LAND TENURE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

INTERNATIONAL  
**LAND**  
COALITION





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*Design:* Federico Pinci. *Published:* October, 2021.

## Tenure

*It determines access to and use of different natural resources and how they relate to one another, through both formal and informal rules and agreements. The term most commonly applies to land. Although there are many definitions of land tenure, a succinct definition from FAO is “the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, between people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land” (FAO et al., 2020a). Secure tenure refers to tenure systems that are well defined, respected and enforceable in a formal court of law or through customary structures in a community. Any land tenure has the potential to be secure or insecure (Ibid.).*

## BACKGROUND

*World hunger increased in 2020, propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The global prevalence of undernourishment (PoU), after remaining virtually unchanged from 2014 to 2019, increased from 8.4% to around 9.9% between 2019 and 2020. In terms of absolute numbers, it is estimated that between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020. Based on calculations using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), it is also estimated that nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) did not have year-round access to adequate food in 2020 – an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year (FAO et al., 2021).*

These numbers are a reminder of the vulnerabilities inherent in our agri-food systems. They also reveal the challenges and the intense pressures that are being placed on land when coupled with increasing demand for food due to population growth and shifting dietary preferences. Land access and use form the basis of any agri-food system. When access and tenure rights fail to comply with human rights and social, economic and environmental sustainability, agri-food systems will be compromised and this may lead to the exclusion of vulnerable groups, along with unsustainable patterns of food production and consumption.

Land rights have also been shown to provide poor people living in rural areas with a first layer of social protection (Tanner, 2016), as tenure security acts as a safety net against income shocks (Ma, 2021). Protecting the land rights of the poor, including those of women and girls, in either written or non-written forms, can therefore provide more assurances for vulnerable groups who are disproportionately likely to suffer evictions, disinheritance and displacements (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012).

The evidence also shows that ensuring land rights within small-scale production systems contributes to sustainable rural incomes and livelihoods and thus

to food security, while also supporting the preservation of ecosystems and the nature-positive practices of small-scale farmers, pastoralists, indigenous people and forest farmers (Landesa, 2012).

This paper highlights too that securing land rights for the array of actors beyond the farm gate, including micro-, small and medium-sized agri-food enterprises involved in moving agri-food produce from farm to fork, needs to be considered as part of broader investment and policy environments. Continuing to promote land rights for small farmers and for the vulnerable is even more important in light of the crisis created by COVID-19, and investments made for the recovery and resilience of all actors in view of sustainable food systems.

The Global Sustainable Development Report (2019) identified the transformation of food systems as one of the key accelerators needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Independent Group of Scientists, 2019). In a follow-up, the UN Secretary-General convened the Food Systems Summit in September 2021 “to launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, delivering progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

1 Depending on assumptions made to reflect uncertainties around the assessment (FAO et al., 2021). “Prevalence of undernourishment” (PoU), is one of two indicators used by the UN in its The State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report (Ibid.) for measuring food insecurity, the other one being the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). This is a statistical inference process used every year to estimate the global number of people who are undernourished. As stated by FAO (2014), undernourishment can be considered “as the extreme form of food insecurity, arising when even the mere caloric supply is inadequate to cover basic needs”.

2 The cost of a healthy diet exceeds the international poverty line (established at USD 1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day), making it unaffordable for those living in poverty.



The aims of this paper are to consolidate lessons from existing evidence that demonstrates the role of equitable access to land and tenure security<sup>3</sup> in achieving sustainable food systems transformation and, subsequently, the importance of these rights for the overall achievement of the SDGs. As such, it helps push the importance of tenure security for sustainable agri-food systems up the policy agenda. In doing this, it identifies recommendations and key actions concerning tenure security and access to land that can potentially contribute to a broader policy agenda for improving food and nutrition security and the transformation of agri-food systems.

The paper leverages insights from broader frameworks such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGTs), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the New Urban Agenda, among others.

<sup>3</sup> Access to land refers to the ability to use land, to control resources and benefits from land, and to transfer the rights to land. Access to land is governed through land tenure systems, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals, households or groups (ILC, 2020a). Unless otherwise stated, this policy paper uses “tenure security” as shorthand to encompass both access to land and security of tenure. Land governance involves the processes, policies and institutions through which land, land rights and other natural resources related to land are managed. This includes decisions on access to land, land rights, land use and land development (FAO, 2021).

## TENURE SECURITY ENSURES SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL

### BY FACILITATING PRODUCTION AND ENABLING FOOD ACCESS, AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

*Despite the weak security of tenure and non-favourable policy environment that often characterise small-scale production systems, it is estimated that smallholder farmers, i.e. those with land holdings of less than two hectares, still produce roughly 35% of the world's food, while operating only around 12% of all agricultural land (Lowder et al., 2021).*

Yet it is on such small-scale farmers that extreme poverty takes the heaviest toll. Globally, roughly 80% of people in extreme poverty live in rural areas, where poverty rates are three times higher than in urban areas (Castañeda et al., 2016). Poverty rates and persistently high levels of income inequality mean that a healthy diet is out of reach for around three billion people around the world (FAO et al., 2021). It is important to note that as agriculture remains the main source of income for many rural households in the developing world, unequal access to land and insecurity of tenure are often among the root causes of rural poverty and inequality (Losch et al., 2012).

There is a broad consensus that ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition requires an increase in sustainable production and greater access to and greater availability and affordability of nutritious food.

Tenure security for small-scale producers is vital for ensuring safe and nutritious food for all. There are multiple connections between food production and tenure security.

Without security of tenure, long-term investments by small-scale farmers, rural agri-entrepreneurs, the rural poor and other vulnerable groups farming or running a small agribusiness on agricultural or rural land will continue to be hampered.

Tenure security can lead to increased investment, as it is generally a condition for accessing financial services or for making autonomous decisions regarding household resources, including what food to produce and how (Chakrabarti, 2020). Secure land and water tenure can, for instance, encourage investments in irrigation systems for improved food productivity and/or the cultivation of high-value crops to generate income. Land tenure and land rights are also closely interconnected with issues related to water tenure, rights and related services that are also intrinsic to productivity and access to safe and nutritious food (FAO, 2020a; FAO, 2020c). In this context, the right to food requires that states refrain from taking measures that may deprive individuals of access to productive resources, including land and natural resources, on which they depend for food production for household consumption (De Schutter, 2010; Borras et al., 2015; McMichael, 2015).

The role of tenure security in terms of access to safe and nutritious food is also strongly related to gender issues. Not only are women generally responsible for home consumption; they are also often the most engaged in food-related agricultural production. Tenure security for women is thus of utmost importance. Tenure security and control of land also have important positive effects on women's empowerment, from financial, economic and social perspectives (FAO, 2020b). An increasing body of research shows that when women in the household have tenure security – including rights to the land they cultivate – they gain improved status, which can lead to greater influence over household decisions regarding food consumption and production (FAO, 2011; FAO, 2020b).

The increasing pressures that are being placed on natural resources pose severe challenges for food production, particularly in the case of more marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) (RRI, 2020; Swiderska et al., 2020; UNDESA, 2021). As the custodians of forests and biodiversity, these groups are the first bulwarks against climate change and the emergence of new diseases and pandemics.

Compromising their rights to land tenure weakens traditional agri-food systems that are based on small, diversified and resilient cropping practices (ILC, 2020b).

Secondly, ensuring safe and nutritious food for all depends also on access to food and the availability and affordability of food. Poverty is the main obstacle to sustainable food access and consumption in both urban and rural settings. Placing tenure security at the centre of poverty eradication strategies has been shown to reduce the risk of eviction for the most vulnerable people and to improve equality of access to land (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). Such strategies facilitate access by the poor to productive assets such as land and natural resources, and they also result in higher and more stable incomes and means to acquire and access sufficient safe and nutritious food. Tenure security is also critical in ensuring the continued role of urban and peri-urban agriculture in food and nutrition security for those living in poverty, particularly in the face of increasing pressures from rapid urban development. As food policy-related processes evolve to include the complexity of urban and peri-urban settings and planning, including the role of “informal” urban food vendors, tenure security remains as a cornerstone of sustainability (Wegerif, 2020; FAO et al., 2021).

Furthermore, for many communities land, whether for production or own consumption, not only provides sustenance for current and future generations but is also connected to spiritual beliefs and traditional knowledge and teachings and is fundamental to cultural reproduction (OECD, 2020; UNDESA, 2021). The increasing concentration of land and also of agri-food value chains can take a heavy toll on local agri-food systems, traditional knowledge and biological diversity, particularly for indigenous peoples, pastoralists, small farmers and forest dwellers (IPES-Food, 2017; Duncan et al., 2020).

Discourse on food as a human right is hence exploring new policy approaches that pay attention to the multiple dimensions of food, including as an essential public good, as a renewable resource and as a determinant of culture and identity.

This is an important step, as the climate and COVID-19 crises highlight the urgent need to review societal priorities and provide an effective framework more based on local priorities and systems for the implementation of the SDGs (IPCC, 2021).

## TENURE SECURITY AS AN ENABLER

### OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS, INCLUSIVE MARKETS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMIES FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

**GLOBAL WASTE PRODUCTION** is predicted to rise by 70% by 2050, with agri-food systems contributing two billion tonnes of waste each year (World Bank, 2018; Global Waste Index, 2019). Along with growing evidence of climate change, unsustainable consumption poses numerous threats to the future of food security and is having adverse impacts on the sustainability of agri-food systems (IPCC, 2021).

In order to change production and consumption patterns, a multipronged strategy will be required, focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor and reducing wastage and the use of finite resources in the production process. Tenure security is implicit in this regard given the reliance of the agri-food sector, from farmers to processors and retailers, on secure access to land in order to plan enterprise activities, including investments (Wegerif, 2020). Specifically, the role of tenure security for farm and food enterprises in contributing to sustainable consumption patterns is essential.

Diversified production on land, in particular under local community and indigenous land management systems, encourages local circuits of production that can be more resilient and sustainable than global value chains, contributing to more diverse diets and sustainable consumption patterns (OECD, 2020). Every effort needs to be made to promote agri-food systems that are conducive to resilience, dietary diversity and environmental sustainability. The COVID-19 crisis has clearly shown how for people living in poverty access to some land for diverse production for their own consumption can be a vital means of accessing food.



As important participants in circular and local agri-food systems, farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs, including small, medium and large enterprises, require improved tenure security as a condition for contributing to more sustainable communities and markets.

In particular, local and regional markets have been shown to result in a shift to more balanced local territorial development (Suttie and Hussein, 2015), including better integrated urban and rural infrastructure and services. Sustainable consumption is also about reducing transport costs and waste. Transitioning to a more localised and more circular food economy with less dependence on fossil fuels, where recycling and repurposing food waste becomes the norm, requires a major emphasis on strengthening the nexus between local markets and sustainable small-scale production and agri-food enterprises, which in turn demands that land rights and responsibilities are well defined. Tenure security in informal settlements, resulting in urban and peri-urban agriculture where solid waste management and the separation of organic waste in slum communities have led to sustainable food production, is also illustrative of such trends (Teklemariam and Cochrane, 2021).

Research shows too that decentralised land management systems, when inclusive, allow local governments and communities to make strategic investments in collective infrastructure that can nudge local food systems towards sustainability. Leveraging the ability to grant tenure security to farms and agri-food enterprises, coupled with access to other local socio-economic services, allows local governments to better support local markets. This shift can be sustainable when it includes the creation of improved public market spaces, public investment in storage and processing/ farming practices and the development of improved, ecologically sound inputs, such as seeds and livestock genetic stock (Wegerif and Anseeuw, 2020).

Transparency and accountability have also been identified as key conditions for ensuring sustained improvements in tenure security, in particular with regards to investment in land and agri-food enterprises, by either domestic or overseas investors (Lay et al., 2021). The literature also demonstrates that tenure security that recognises the rights of farmers and local communities will contribute to protecting land rights and the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in relation to any investment project that affects their land and livelihoods,<sup>4</sup> and will promote the involvement of those whose land and territories are affected in decision-making processes as the main counterpart in land transactions.

## TENURE SECURITY FOR BOOSTING NATURE-POSITIVE PRODUCTION

**NATURE-POSITIVE PRODUCTION** refers to the protection, sustainable management and restoration of productive systems (Hodson et al., 2020) and is reliant largely on the health of land and ecosystems and that of the natural environment. Secure and gender-sensitive tenure rights to land, along with responsible governance, provide the needed social, economic, and political motivation to promote food production that is more nature-positive and that conserves the natural environment, while reducing disturbances to natural habits, requisites for human survival, life on land and well-being.

Increasing global populations and urbanisation continue to put pressure on land due to demand for more food commodities, pasture, shelter, infrastructure development and ecosystem services. As urban populations increase in size, so too does the intensification of construction zones and also of food production, resulting in higher conversion rates of arable and fertile land. Research shows that these trends have led to reductions in crop and breed diversity, compromising the resilience of agri-food ecosystems against future climate change and against pests and pathogens (IBPES, 2019). To respond to global demand for food and nutrition, changes in land use are leading to the conversion of pristine native habitats (e.g. forests, grasslands and mangroves) into agricultural systems that involve unsustainable land use practices. As a result, nature-positive production is compromised and ecosystem resilience is diminished. Because land is fixed in quantity, there is ever increasing competition to control land resources and to capitalise on flows of goods and services from the land (UNCCD, 2016; UNCCD, n.d.).

In addition, conventional agricultural production systems have been shown to be failing to “reconcile the need for meeting the demands of the growing and increasingly affluent population with the necessity of restoring the environment and improving the quality of soil and other natural resources” (Hodson et al., 2020).

The literature on policy relating to tenure security also recognises the stewardship role of IPLCs, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, ranchers living in rangelands and forest family farmers, as well as the roles that their territories can play in terms of carbon storage, preservation of global biodiversity and bio-cultural conservation and justice (RRI, 2020; UNEP, 2020). It has been shown that IPLC territories account for approximately 50% of the world’s total land area, but such communities can claim legal ownership over only 10% of this land (RRI/ILC/Oxfam, 2016). The evidence also shows that sustainable agricultural practices are more prevalent among IPLCs (FAO/FILAC, 2021). Tenure insecurity and lack of legal recognition and protection of the legitimate rights of IPLCs to lands, territories and resources increases the likelihood that biodiverse territory will be converted to agricultural land where carbon-intensive production systems for crops and livestock are practised unsustainably (Anseeuw et al., 2012; UNFSS Summit, 2021a).

Improving tenure security will therefore provide assurances to vulnerable farmers and indigenous peoples that they can continue to follow nature-friendly land use practices that contribute to the health of the land and soils and conserve ecosystems and landscapes for nature-positive production. The case is also made that land tenure security will empower vulnerable groups to adopt a better balance of local land use patterns (UNFSS Summit, 2021a), while leveraging access to water, pastures, forests and fishing waters (Veit, 2019; UNFSS Summit, 2021b).

<sup>4</sup> Including (1) the duty to consult, (2) FPIC and (3) good faith (as detailed by the normative framework of FPIC, which consists of a series of legal international instruments including UNDRIP, the International Labour Organization Convention 169 (ILO 169) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) among many others, as well as national laws).

## TENURE SECURITY ADVANCES EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS AND GENDER JUSTICE

**INEQUALITY IN ACCESS TO LAND, LAND RIGHTS AND OWNERSHIP** *has been shown to be increasing for the rural poor, with new evidence from ILC showing huge disparities in the control of agricultural land value between the top 10% of landowners and the bottom 50% (including landless households) in a number of developing and emerging countries (ILC, 2020a).<sup>5</sup> This study also found that land inequality threatens the livelihoods of an estimated 2.5 billion people involved in small-scale agriculture, as well the world's poorest 1.4 billion people, most of whom depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods (ILC, 2020a). Access to land is also shown to be a major determinant of rural wealth and rural poverty (Woodhill et al., 2020).*

Overall, land inequality, through its interconnectedness with social, economic, environmental and spatial inequalities, influences people's resilience and capacity to act, make decisions and shape their food systems and livelihoods. Poverty, displacement, poor living conditions, social exclusion and lack of opportunities – often arising from unequal access to land – all have negatively impacts on food systems (ILC, 2020a).

Tenure security for sustainable livelihoods also needs to be considered beyond the rural space and the farm, and for instance must include the need for security of housing in urban areas and the role of this in ensuring stable incomes and food and nutrition security (OHCHR, 2021).

Given the centrality of land in food production and the key role that production plays for the consumption and incomes of many rural households, strategies to achieve poverty reduction may benefit to a considerable extent from secure and equitable access to land. Security of tenure can be seen as an endowment for guaranteeing food security and livelihoods for households reliant on multiple sources of income.

As long as employment prospects remain limited and ownership of land continues to play an important part in maintaining food security and averting extreme poverty, securing and improving tenure rights and access to land should be seen as integral components of both social protection and agricultural policies. Furthermore, where there is still agrarian dualism, coupled with mass rural unemployment and low wages, rural poverty and unemployment can be tackled by encouraging greater economic productivity by smallholder agriculture (Kay, 2002). In this context more equitable access to land, coupled with a favourable environment in terms of policy, services and technology, can pave the way for improved agricultural incomes for smallholder farmers, micro and small businesses and workers across food value chains, and hence can support inclusive rural transformation and overall development (Studwell, 2013; Putzel, 2000; Quan, 2006; Lynnette et al., 2021; Raihan et al., 2009; UNDROP, 2018).

The most vulnerable groups, such as rural women and youth, are more susceptible to land inequality, which reinforces patterns of social exclusion for these groups, especially girls, and reduces income generation, employment prospects and opportunities to contribute to sustainable transformation of the food system.

Although 164 countries have to date recognised women's rights to own, use and make decisions about land on equal terms with men, only 52 guarantee such rights in law and in practice, leaving millions of women and girls in a situation of insecurity (UN Women/OHCHR, 2020).

Strengthening women's land rights has a positive effect on a range of development goals, including poverty reduction and food security, empowering them to make decisions on land use and giving them greater bargaining power and economic opportunities. FAO has estimated that, worldwide, if women had the same access as men to productive resources such as land and fertilisers, they could raise yields on their farms by 20–30% and increase total agricultural output by between 2.5% and 4% (FAO, 2011). The gains in agricultural output alone could lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger. For such results to be achieved and without adding to the burden on women, who still carry primary responsibility for reproductive work (women provide the majority of unpaid care work, for example looking after children and the sick), interventions are needed to address gender inequalities in homes and in communities and more investment is needed in basic services, such as health care and education.

Embedding measures that address gender-sensitive tenure security and land tenure practices within policies, along with participation in policy dialogues, across the food system will increase empowerment for women and youth, providing a foundation for better livelihood opportunities (Oxfam, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Overall, South Asia and Latin America exhibit the highest levels of inequality, with the top 10% of landowners capturing up to 75% of agricultural land, followed by Africa and China and Vietnam at levels of around 55–60% (ILC, 2020a).

## TENURE SECURITY BUILDS RESILIENCE TO VULNERABILITIES, SHOCKS AND STRESS

*Violent conflicts, displacements and environmental threats, such as weather extremes and degradation of natural resources, are among the main drivers of food insecurity crises. The coming years will most likely see old shocks intensifying and new, unknown shocks emerging (Fan et al., 2014) against the ongoing mega-trends of population growth, urbanisation and climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic has also been a reminder of the vulnerability of food systems (ILC, 2020b). Coupled with shocks that have occurred in recent years, the pandemic has contributed to reversing the food security gains achieved up until 2014. The centrality of land is notable as a key component in both the causes and effects of the numerous conflicts and crises that have disrupted food systems in recent years.<sup>6</sup>*

The nexus between land and conflicts is not always linear, but most contemporary conflicts that have arisen in the frame of economic and environmental stressors clearly reflect increased competition over land and natural resources between different groups. Such crises can be the result of structural land inequalities, historic grievances or intra-state conflicts over land and water, or can result from the issuing of concessions for the exploitation of high-value natural resources without required consultations taking place with affected communities (Anseeuw et al., 2012). Issues of unclear and disputed tenure concerning land, natural resources and territories are often found to be among the root causes of violent conflict or at least are a major contributing factor, with land identified as a factor in over half of violent conflicts between 2000 and 2015. Further, research shows that land is likely to become an even more important factor in conflict as pressure on natural resources increases with population growth (Locke et al., 2021).

Policies on tenure security and access to land are also often influenced by political dynamics and interests that prioritise the largest producers over incumbent small-scale producers, especially women, thus threatening their livelihoods and food security. When land rights are not secure and there is a lack of transparency and fairness governing formal and informal rules and institutions, conflicts can turn violent: for example, in cases involving forced evictions of IPLCs from their traditional land (Lay et al., 2021).

Multi-stakeholder mechanisms that help different parties to reach acceptable terms on equitable access to land, tenure security and transparency of governance therefore represent an important pillar in maintaining peace, food security and sustainable development, without which conflicts would be more likely to recur or intensify (Locke et al., 2021; UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, 2012; UNEP, 2009).

These same issues can be aggravated by increasing land degradation and desertification, which exacerbate conflicts over access to land and water and to natural resources in general. In the case of protracted crises – whether man-made or the result of natural hazards – issues related to land and natural resources and the collapse of legitimate governance are likely to be among the root causes (FAO, 2012).

The role of tenure security in maintaining biodiverse ecosystems also has implications for human health. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, research in ecology and social-ecological systems had begun to identify a positive relationship between biodiversity and resilience, with a close interconnectedness between the state of the environment and disasters and also links to emerging infectious diseases (EIDs). The literature highlights the connections between intensive production and livestock systems replacing complex landscapes, ecosystem services and the protection of wildlife environments and the spread of zoonotic diseases among humans. For instance, over 60% of EIDs of humans are zoonotic, with most outbreaks of disease originating from wildlife reservoirs and natural ecosystems adjacent to the expansion of agricultural frontiers or degraded ecosystems (Gottdenker et al., 2014; Morse et al., 2018; Faust et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2013). Tenure security that supports other production models, with more sustainable uses of land (such as by IPLCs), is a core building block in addressing such issues.

<sup>6</sup> Food systems are resilient when all their components at multiple levels (from land use to food processing and market distribution, and the policy environment) have the capacity “to provide sufficient, appropriate and accessible food to all in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances”, guaranteeing stability during turbulent times (Tendall et al., 2015).



# 3

## TOWARDS A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

*The recommendations listed in this Blueprint for Action are cross-cutting, with each one addressing different issues detailed in this paper. They are based on the VGGTs, the RAI principles and other guidelines already mentioned that have resulted from negotiations to address issues relevant to this policy paper. These recommendations are all important and complementary, and not listed in any particular order.*

### ▶ **ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LAND IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO FOOD SECURITY, POVERTY ERADICATION AND JOB GENERATION**

Governments should develop policies and institutions for land ownership, use and distribution through inclusive decision-making processes which promote equitable patterns of land access, control and tenure security. Land acquisitions that result in rural poverty, job losses and food insecurity should be avoided, and the CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) should be promoted. Land reforms and land market regulations, including land taxes, are powerful policy tools to help avoid land concentration and shape more inclusive agri-food systems.

### ▶ **STRENGTHEN TENURE SECURITY, AND IN PARTICULAR PROTECT COMMON AND CUSTOMARY RIGHTS, FOR AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE**

Governments should recognise, respect, safeguard, protect, promote and facilitate all legitimate holders of tenure rights, together with the rights themselves, including the legitimate tenure rights of the most vulnerable people and of IPLCs with customary tenure systems who exercise self-governance of land, fisheries and forests, with special attention to the provision of equitable access for women, in line with the VGGTs. This should be based on a human rights-based approach, recognising the right to determine self-identity, human dignity and well-being within agri-food systems. The traditional, collective knowledge and practices of these rights holders should be respected, their traditional diets should be protected and their nutrition and well-being

should be a priority. In this respect, special attention should be paid to customary land rights, ranging from legally recognised and documented community land rights through to legitimate non-statutory and undocumented rights. An urgent task is to recognise the territorial rights and governance systems of IPLCs as custodians of forests and biodiversity and as bulwarks against the emergence of pandemics, which weaken food systems.

### ▶ **INVEST IN INCLUSIVE, TRANSPARENT, VIABLE AND ACCESSIBLE LAND INSTITUTIONS**

Governments and stakeholders should invest in institutions and technology for efficient and fully transparent land governance systems, administrations and registries, including at decentralised levels. Recording and formalisation processes should be socio-culturally appropriate and acceptable and involve local authorities and representatives in the process. This should provide an informed base of data and knowledge for land use, land ownership and land control that is shared with governmental organisations, the private sector, producers' organisations, indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems, constituency-based organisations and other local land users, and with citizens in general. Governments should ensure the integrated management and use of land and the creation of farmer and social protection registries in order to harmonise policies for ensuring equal access to land and eradicating rural poverty and food insecurity. Taken together, these efforts are central to achieving inclusive and participatory land policy frameworks and governance structures.

▶ **ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEGALLY ENFORCE RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE PRACTICE IN LAND AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS**

Governments, especially those of investor countries, should oblige companies registered in their jurisdictions to observe and report against the principles of key international frameworks, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains and the RAI principles. Host countries should upgrade their legal frameworks to be equal to or stronger than the standards of international frameworks. This should be combined with regulations to end violations and address land loss and concentration and support for guaranteed access to remedy and justice to deal with infringements of legitimate tenure rights, along with affordable and prompt enforcement of outcomes, including just compensation where tenure rights are taken for public purposes.

▶ **STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY AND MONITORING OF LAND USE, CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP**

Governments should ensure public access to information about all transfers of rights to use land, whether through purchase, rental, usage or shareholding. Land registries should include information regarding institutional ownership and control of land through sophisticated financial instruments, including listed and unlisted funds. Public support, including development finance for investments or projects, should be contingent on the release of all relevant information. At the same time, there should be greater investment in the capacity of citizen-led monitoring initiatives, including the monitoring of companies and their shareholders operating in agriculture and land-related activities and controlling production.

▶ **RECOGNISE AND PROTECT LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH**

Governments, in accordance with national legislation, should ensure women's equal tenure rights and promote their equal access to and control over productive land, natural resources, inputs, productive tools and access to education, training, markets and information, in line with the VGGTs. Securing the rights of women and youth and strengthening their access to land will help improve qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of food systems. Governments should ensure gender equality in land rights, in law and in practice. This requires a range of actions, from legislating for equal opportunities and rights to encouraging adaptation of social norms, attitudes or behaviours that support self-directed decision-making by women and youth and their ability to benefit from land. Legal mechanisms should enforce the rights of women and youth to land when they are under threat and provide mechanisms for redress, including in collective land tenure systems.

▶ **RECOGNISE THE TENURE RIGHTS OF IPLCs TO THEIR LANDS, TERRITORIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

This paper highlights the central role played by indigenous peoples through their knowledge and food systems in protecting a large majority of the world's remaining biodiversity and in acting as custodians of natural resources and ecosystems. Compromising the tenure rights of indigenous peoples, both collective and individual, to their lands, territories and natural resources and the tenure rights of local communities weakens their capacities to use land, aquatic resources and forests and hampers global efforts towards the eradication of hunger and the building of sustainable agri-food systems. Therefore, actions that may affect the rights of IPLCs should respect the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), including indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights over their knowledge of plants and natural resources.

▶ **DEVELOP INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS THAT SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION OF POLICIES, IN PARTICULAR POLICIES FOR LAND AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS**

This paper describes the far-reaching influence of land tenure on the agri-food system, reaching beyond the rights of people to encompass biodiversity, food security and production, gender equity, diversification of livelihoods and income, and conflict. Ensuring that decision-making systems on the governance of land tenure are informed by the cross-fertilisation of data and evidence from related sectors and disciplines, such as forestry, fisheries, water, environment, enterprise development, gender and labour, will enable the design of integrated and tailored policies that are relevant to the land tenure systems of targeted territories, while also contributing to the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems.

▶ **BUILD MORE SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE PRODUCTION MODELS AND AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS**

Tenure security and equitable access to land are essential conditions for building more sustainable and equitable agri-food systems, but on their own they are not sufficient. They have to be complemented by a whole range of agricultural policies: these include improvements in public market spaces, public food procurement from small-scale producers, public investment in research and development for improved and ecologically sound inputs such as seed and livestock genetic stock, public investment in small-scale and appropriate storage and processing technology, policy reforms for adapting sanitary and phytosanitary requirements to the needs of small-scale producers and support for cooperatives and for farmer-to-farmer learning and sharing of agro-ecological farming practices. Also, governments should recognise the importance of pastoralists and sustainable rangelands management and grazing systems for nutrition, healthy ecosystems, rural livelihoods and resilient

food supply chains, and should encourage low-input pastoral systems in order to produce healthy animal-sourced food that contributes to reducing poverty and hunger.

These movements involve the promotion of farmers who are secure on their land and are able to obtain reasonable returns from employing agro-ecological or at least low-external-input production practices, linked with local markets and rural industries that generate and maintain added value, employment and income at a local level. The territorial approaches they embrace allow for more inclusive and democratic processes and for the protection of national agricultural production and food markets. These kinds of strategy are supported by the VGFSyN, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (which to date has been adopted by 120 cities) and the New Urban Agenda adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2016.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy paper on *Land Tenure and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems* has been developed through a consultative process involving a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, academia, grassroots organisations and the private sector, from different parts of the world. It has been supported by a number of partners, including bilateral and multilateral donors within the Global Donor Working Group on Land (GDWGL).

The paper was prepared and written by a team from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (including Javier Molina Cruz, Francesco Maria Pierri, Adriano Campolina, Samuel Mabikke and Siobhan Kelly), Ward Anseeuw from the International Land Coalition (ILC) and Everlyne Nairesiae from the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and UN-Habitat.

The team is grateful for invaluable and significant contributions from our Advisory Group members, including Joan Carling (Co-convenor of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for the SDGs), Sanjee Singh (Habitat for Humanity), Philip Seufert (FIAN), Sofia Monsalve (FIAN), Cheikh Oumar Ba (IPAR), Walter Chambati (Sam Moyo African Institute of Agrarian Studies), Francine Picard (IISD), Marc Wegerif (University of Pretoria), Selmira Flores (Nitlapan), Esther Obaikol (IGAD), Victoria Stanley (World Bank), Olivier De Schutter (Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights), Peter Messerli (Wyss Academy for Nature and University of Bern), Patricia Chaves (Espaço Feminista), Esther Penunia (AFA), Jolyne Sanjak (Tetra Tech) and all those who participated in the Advisory Group meetings. The members of the Advisory Group provided comments in their individual capacity, and their participation does not mean that individuals or their organisations endorse this policy paper in total or in part.

The team acknowledges the support from the Global Donor Working Group on Land and expresses gratitude for the contributions and feedback received through Mathieu Boche from the French Development Agency (AFD) and Bernard Zaugg from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The team also wishes to express special thanks to the following individuals for their continuous support and advice: Benjamin Davis, Guenter Hemrich and Maximo Torero Cullen from FAO, Michael Taylor from ILC and Robert Lewis-Lettington from UN-Habitat.

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