**The Right to Food**

**A Resource for Caritas Staff Who Work with Governments**

*Adapted for Caritas from the Food and Agriculture Organisation’s guidelines on the right to food*

**1 Food is a right**

• Protect it and other human rights through democracy, the rule of law, and good governance.

• Food should not be used as a tool for political and economic pressure.

*“I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.”-- Genesis 1:29*

*“Give them something to eat.” Matthew 14:16*

**2 Laws can protect it**

• Establish policy goals and benchmarks towards ending hunger.

• Promote adequate food through domestic production, trade, storage and distribution.

• Permit farmers, fishers, foresters and other food producers, particularly women, to earn a fair return from their labour.

• Improve access to land and water.

• Create conditions that encourage stable employment.

 *“The worker deserves his wages.”—Luke 10:7*

**3 Prioritize the poor**

• When creating and enforcing food-related laws, give priority to the poorest.

*“Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.” —Matthew 25:40*

**4 Make sure markets help the hungry**

• Prevent uncompetitive practices in markets.

• Promote corporate social responsibility.

• Protect consumers against fraudulent market practices, misinformation and unsafe food.

• Develop small-scale local and regional markets and border trade.

• Establish storage, transportation, and distribution systems to improve links between local and larger markets.

• Provide adequate social safety nets, because markets do not automatically result in everybody having enough money to eat.

• Take into account the shortcomings of market mechanisms in protecting the environment and public goods.

*“Protect the person who is being cheated from the one who is cheating him.” —Jeremiah 22:3*

*“Differing weights and false scales, both of them are abominable.” —Proverbs 20*

Caritas in action: In India, unscrupulous traders sometimes exploit farmers from certain tribes when the farmers try to sell their produce, offering them prices that are too low. Caritas started farmers' markets where tribal farmers have more control, and can get better prices for their food.

**5 Don’t let disorganisation hurt the hungry**

• Coordinate efforts of government ministries.

• Make and enforce anticorruption policies for the food sector and in the management of emergency food aid.

 *“He who sows injustice will reap calamity.” —Proverbs 22:8*

 *“He who oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to want.” —Proverbs 22:16*

**6 Share knowledge about what works**

• Share know-how between civil society and the private sector.

*“Instruct the wise, and they become still wiser.” —Proverbs 9:9*

**7 Pass the right laws**

• Pass laws that will lead to everyone having enough to eat.

• Inform the general public of these laws and their rights.

*“Rulers will rule with justice.” —Isaiah 32:1*

 Caritas in action: In Malawi, Caritas has encouraged political candidates to sign a pledge saying that, if elected, they will work to help small-scale farmers in remote areas sell their produce.

**8 Make sure poor people have land and water to grow food**

• Protect land tenure, especially for women and the poor.

• Have legislation that protects the full and equal right to own land and other property, including the right to inherit.

• Take special account of indigenous communities.

• Safeguard drinking-water quality.

• Protect relevant traditional knowledge

• Prevent water pollution, protect the fertility of the soil, and promote the sustainable management of fisheries and forestry.

• Promote rural finance and microcredit for poor farmers.

*“I shall cultivate the ground around the tree and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future.” —Luke 13:8*

 Caritas in action: In Cambodia, foreign companies sometimes do land grabs or take over fishing areas. Caritas works with local governments to make sure that communities know their legal rights to the land and water.

**9 Keep food safe**

• Put in place food-control systems that reduce risk of food-borne disease .

• Ensure food safety in the entire food chain including animal feed.

• Eliminate gaps in inspection systems.

• Establish standards for packaging, labelling and advertising food.

• Help farmers and food handlers to follow good hygiene practices.

• Make sure food business operators do not leave harmful residues in food or hurt the environment.

• Enforce safe storage, handling and use of food.

• Tell the public about food-borne diseases and food safety.

• Protect consumers from deception and misrepresentation in the packaging, labelling, advertising and sale of food.

*“The field is ruined, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined.” —Joel 1:10*

 Caritas in action: Farmers in Southeast Asia lose rice when it rots in improper storage. They may also not be able to hold their rice until a good time to sell, and lose money to traders. Caritas helps farmer cooperatives procure and use storage buildings that protect their rice.

**10 Make sure food is nutritious**

• Prevent overconsumption and unbalanced diets that may lead to malnutrition, obesity and degenerative diseases.

• Encourage gardens at home and at school to combat micronutrient deficiencies and promote healthy eating.

• Fortify foods to prevent and cure micronutrient deficiencies, in particular of iodine, iron and Vitamin A.

• Consider specific nutritional needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

• Encourage breastfeeding.

• Stop discriminatory feeding practices in households, such as feeding girls less food than boys.

• Take into account local food practices, customs and traditions.

*“I do not want to send them away hungry.” —Matthew 15:32*

Caritas in action: In Comores, off the east coast of Africa, malnutrition rates were growing because of imported food. Caritas staff went to communities to teach people about the importance of local produce like bananas and potatoes.

**11 Teach people about food and farming**

• Broaden primary education opportunities, especially for girls, women and other underserved populations.

• Encourage agricultural and environmental education.

• Allocate resources for antihunger and food security purposes and to protect them from budget reductions.

*“Train the young in the way they should go.” —Proverbs 22:6*

*“Bring up your children to do what is right.” —Tobit 14:9*

Caritas in action: In Nepal, Caritas teaches farmers’ cooperatives how to care for livestock, raise crops, and control pests. The cooperatives place special emphasis on training women and people from Dalit (‘untouchable’) classes.

**12 Make food a budget priority**

• Ensure that budget cuts do not negatively affect access to adequate food among the poorest sections of society.

*“From the hungry you have withheld bread.” –Job 22:7*

 Caritas in action: In Europe, Caritas is lobbying governments who want to cut the budgets of food programmes.

**13 Don’t let donated food be stolen or used wrongly**

 • Use Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) to identify the most vulnerable/hungry people.

• Establish transparent, non-discriminatory eligibility criteria in providing food aid.

• Prevent leakages and corruption.

• Channel food assistance via women to ensure that the food is used for the family.

*“I was hungry and you gave me food.” —Matthew 25:35*

**14 Provide safety nets**

• Maintain social safety and food safety nets.

• Locally procure food assistance to help the hungry and help local producers.

*“You have sent widows away empty.” —Job 22:9*

**15 Reduce dependence**

• Base food aid provisions on sound needs assessment.

• Provide food aid with a clear exit strategy to avoid the creation of dependency.

• Use local and regional commercial markets to meet food needs in famine-prone countries and reduce dependence on food aid.

*“If anyone is unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.” —2 Thessalonians 3:10*

Caritas in action: In Kenya, Afghanistan, and many other countries, Caritas offers “food for work” during times of hunger. Caritas organizes local people to work on community projects, such as digging reservoirs or clearing roads of snow. Caritas then gives the workers food in exchange for their work.

**16 Don’t use food as a weapon during war**

**Food should never be used as a means of political and economic pressure.**

**Never starve civilians as a method of warfare.**

Do not attack, destroy, remove or render useless farmland, livestock, crops, drinking water installations, irrigation works, or anything that helps produce food.

• An occupying power has the duty of ensuring food.

• Ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons have adequate food.

• In the case of natural or human-made disasters, states should provide food.

• Take appropriate emergency preparedness measures, such as keeping food stocks.

*“They will devour your harvest and your food; they will devour your sons and your daughters; they will devour your flocks and your herds.” —Jeremiah 5:17*

Caritas in action: In war-torn Syria, Caritas gives food vouchers to hungry families. Caritas also gives food to Syrian refugee families in Jordan, Lebanon and beyond. As areas of Syria are deliberately cut off from supplies, Caritas strongly protests the use of hunger as a weapon.

**17 Track progress**

• Establish hunger reduction targets to be achieved in the short, medium and long term and track them.

• Monitor hunger among vulnerable groups, especially women, children and the elderly, and their nutritional status, including micronutrient deficiencies.

*"How can I help you?" Elisha answered her. "Tell me what you have in the house." "This servant of yours has nothing in the house but a jug of oil," the widow replied. —2 Kings 4*

**18 Keep governments honest**

Establish ombudspersons who are independent from the government to monitor that government’s food activities.

*“Do not rob the poor.”—Proverbs 22:22*