



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

CONSUMERS



**CONSUMER
ORGANIZATIONS AND THE
RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD**
MAKING THE CONNECTION



CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD



MAKING THE CONNECTION

Required citation:

FAO. 2021. *Consumer organizations and the right to adequate food– Making the connections*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3685en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

ISBN 978-92-5-134076-9

© FAO, 2021



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Cover photo: ©Freepik

CONTENTS

FOREWORD V

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS VII

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS IX

INTRODUCTION 1

The challenge 1

The importance of consumers 2

1 Human rights for consumer organizations 4

1.1 What are human rights? 4

1.2 The United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 4

1.3 A human rights-based approach for consumer organizations 5

2 The human right to adequate food 9

2.1 The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 10

2.2 General Comment 12 10

2.3 The obligations on States 12

2.4 In support of implementation 12

3 Persuasive voluntary instruments relating to consumers and the right to adequate food 15

3.1 The Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security 16

3.2 Supporting greater private sector accountability 17

3.3 Healthy diets and the importance of consumer action for the right to adequate food 20

3.4 Consumer organizations’ engagement with food standards and safety 23

4 The Sustainable Development Goals – Fundamental for consumers 27

5 The Paris Agreement – Why consumers need to know about reducing carbon emissions 31

6 Consumers and food systems transformation 35

7 Takeaways 39

7.1 Consumer priorities based in human rights 39

7.2 Share knowledge and build capacity 39

7.3 Transform food systems around rights and sustainability 39

7.4 Engage with multiple stakeholders 40

ANNEXES 43

NOTES 56

TABLES

Table 1 International binding commitments relevant to the Right to Adequate Food and level of ratifications 9

Table 2 International persuasive guidelines relevant to the Right to Adequate Food 15



FOREWORD

Consumers are a powerful force for change towards more sustainable and equitable food systems; their behaviour makes a difference.

The human right to adequate food relates to all aspects of food systems transformation. Food systems transformation includes sustainable agriculture, stringent food safety, the reduction of food loss and waste, better health and wellbeing, gender equality, non-discrimination and protection of the most vulnerable. It also consists of food security, nutrition and affordable healthy diets, greater resilience to climate change and shocks, innovation, decent work, inclusion and fairer, more accountable trade.

In 2004, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food in the context of national food security (Right to Food Guidelines). Key elements of these guidelines are sustainability, food safety and consumer protection which support the actualisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. These elements are also fundamental to the discussion around the transformation of food systems.

While there has been significant progress since the turn of the century to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food, because of the global pandemic and with hunger and poverty on the rise, perhaps now more than ever, it is time to revisit the ideals of universal food rights. It is time to engage more and more actors into the demands of a sustainably developing world which leaves no one behind and respects the human rights of all.

The behaviour of consumers makes a significant difference. Consumers are a powerful force for change towards more sustainable and equitable food systems. Raising the awareness of consumer organizations to the different aspects of the human right to adequate food can have a rippling effect. Raising awareness will amplify the voice of consumers and facilitate knowledge of their rights, their responsibilities and their capabilities as agents for change. When they bring their experiences to the decision-making tables, they have the ability to drive governments and industry to meet the demands for sustainable healthy diets, food security for all, and towards the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The need for transformed and sustainable food systems makes multi-stakeholder partnerships, collaboration and multi-disciplinary coordination vital drivers to help end hunger and malnutrition.

In order to protect, promote and defend the rights of consumers, consumer organizations around the world work frequently in uncertain economic, social and political contexts. Their important work on food rights makes them essential partners in policy-making. They represent a wide and diverse body of stakeholders, as well as provide a public perspective, incorporating the concerns and interests of citizens. With their wide membership base and outreach networks, they place pressure on both governments and the private sector to protect people from poor quality and hazardous foods and exploitative business practices. They are also able to promote healthy diets.

Consumer organizations bring valuable information, expert insight and knowledge to the decision-making tables. Their contributions to the formulation and implementation of global, regional and national policies for food security and nutrition can protect the right to adequate food now, and in the future. Their input, based on consumer experiences and campaigns, can provide necessary feedback on policy implementation and can support effective policy by informing decision-making.

The role of consumer organizations is to increase knowledge and to raise awareness regarding issues such as food safety; adequate, healthy diets; access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods; access to markets and reasonable pricing; transparent marketing and labelling practices; fair trade; and non-discriminatory labour and production practices.

Consumer organizations connect with other civil society organizations based on common concerns and together, they can influence dialogue, policy and advocacy for the right to food.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the fault lines in our current food systems. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, and it is pushing millions of more people into hunger and poverty. Its global devastation to lives and livelihoods makes the need for radical change, innovative planning, investment, and reconstruction urgent. We have also witnessed how there can be collaborative and effective responses to crisis. Some countries responded with emergency food and social protection policies, and the private sector has shown enormous capacity to innovate and bring communities together during this global health and economic shock.

Despite all of its challenges, the current situation should be taken as an opportunity to reboot systems, to build back better, and to ensure that the COVID-19 global recovery be inclusive, more fair and informed. The recovery efforts can involve more people, including people who haven't had a voice, which will result in lasting positive change that will transform people's lives and facilitate countries' capacities for meeting the sustainable development goal (SDGs) targets, for which the world is currently well off-track. It is essential to mobilise more people and governments to transform food systems towards a more fair and sustainable model. A human rights-based approach is a vital element towards this recovery.

FAO seeks to end hunger and malnutrition. FAO seeks to strengthen the right to adequate, healthy food and food security. FAO and Consumers International, the global umbrella group representing more than 200 consumer organizations, joined forces in 2017 to collaborate under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in pursuance of a common vision towards a food- system transformation to end malnutrition.

This publication addresses the principal areas of the food issues that consumer organizations champion and it seeks to support them from a human rights perspective. It is designed as a complement to Consumer Organizations in Action, which showcases the experiences of consumer organizations regarding food issues, facilitates networking, partnerships, and the exchange of knowledge, skills, strategies and good practice. With this document we aspire to make connections between the important work of consumer organizations and the actualization of the right to adequate food, as well as to increase the visibility of these organizations, highlighting their importance for food security, healthy diets and food systems transformation. In showcasing how the work of consumer organizations contributes towards securing the right to adequate food for all at local, national, regional and global levels, it seeks to reinforce their place as vital partners at the policy- and decision-making table. Essentially, this publication is intended to help build more momentum towards a world where no one is left behind, where the human right to adequate food for all people is met.

Benjamin Davis

Director

Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication has been prepared by the Right to Food team of the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality of the FAO. Claire Mason, Right to Food Team Specialist, was responsible for the overall preparation and coordination of the publication, together with Juan Carlos García y Cebolla, Right to Food Team Leader, responsible in addition for the technical supervision.

It was completed in collaboration with FAO Partnerships and within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between FAO and Consumers International in 2017 and renewed in 2020. This MoU seeks to develop, promote and strengthen joint actions and projects to improve food security and nutrition, working towards the full realization of the right to adequate food worldwide, sustainable consumption and in pursuance of a common vision towards a food system transformation that will end malnutrition in all its forms.

Much of the information for the completion of this publication has come from the many achievements of Consumers International and its member organizations at global, regional and national level. Some examples of these are included here, with a fuller description of the work of these and other consumer organizations from around the globe contained in the accompanying *Consumer Organizations in Action*.

This publication has undoubtedly benefitted in all aspects from the input, support and experiences of Consumers International and a selection of its member organizations, who generously provided invaluable information about their activities in relation to food rights. Their willingness to collaborate and provide inputs was extraordinary, especially given the demanding work they are doing, often with very limited resources and sometimes in complex circumstances. It should be noted that the bulk of the information relating to consumer organizations was gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The text was kindly reviewed by Right to Food team colleagues, Serena Pepino, Sarah Brand and Marie-Lara Hubert. The Right to Food Team wishes to acknowledge the following individuals, teams and groups in FAO who contributed with their comments and inputs at different stages which greatly enriched the publication: Jose Valls Bedeau, Policy Officer; Simon Blondeau, Legal Officer; Marco Knowles, Technical Adviser; Tamoko Kato, Nutrition Officer; Chris Hegadorn, CFS Secretary; Ricardo Rapallo, FAO Representative; Dulclair Sternaldt, Partnerships Officer; Manuela Cuvi, Legal Officer; Alberto Ramirez, Rural Development Specialist; Jean Franzen, Food Security Officer; Israel Rios, Nutrition Officer; Michaela Espinoza Reyes, Food and Nutrition Specialist; Luis Lobo, Technical Officer; Jorge Gonzalez, Healthy Food Specialist; Marcela Curiquen Mouat, Partnerships Specialist; Gerson Vasquez Vergara, Food Security Specialist; Arturo Angulo, Partnerships Specialist; Guilherme Brady, Partnership Officer; Mphumuzi SuKati, Food and Nutrition Officer; and Kosuke Shiraishi, Food Safety and Quality Specialist.

The final copyediting was carried out by Daniel Cullen, and translation into Spanish and French by Juan Abad Zapatero and Angeline Hadman respectively. The layout and graphic design is by Carlos de la Fuente. Finally, Marta Ramón Pascual, Right to Food Communication Specialist, supported the review, editing, translation and dissemination of the publication throughout.

This publication and *Consumer Organizations in Action* are made possible thanks to the contributions of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission	NDC	Nationally determined contribution
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	NHRI	National human rights institution
CFS	Committee on World Food Security	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CFS-RAI	CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems	OHCHR	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
COFI	Committee on Fisheries	PAN	Pesticide Action Network International
CSOs	Civil society organizations	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
EC	European Commission	SSF	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	UN	United Nations
FIVIMS	Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
GHG	Greenhouse gas	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
GM	Genetically modified	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GMO	Genetically modified organism	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts	UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
HRBA	Human rights-based approach	UNGCP	United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection
IBFAN	International Baby Food Action Network	UN HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ICN2	Second International Conference on Nutrition	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
IGE	Intergovernmental Group of Experts for Consumer Protection Law and Policy	WFP	World Food Programme
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization	WHO	World Health Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization	WTO	World Trade Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization		
NCD	Non-communicable disease		



“My goal for the United Nations — as it marks its seventy-fifth anniversary — is to promote a human rights vision that is transformative, that provides solutions and that speaks directly to each and every human being. To that end, we must broaden the base of support for human rights by reaching out to critics and engaging in conversations that reach deeply into society.”

Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, 2020¹

INTRODUCTION

Putting people first, by making human rights concepts pertaining to economic, social, cultural and environmental rights part of general understanding and everyday discourse on development, will strengthen efforts to achieve a world where people live free from hunger or malnutrition, in dignity, leaving no one behind. In this third decade of the twenty-first century, as we head towards the 2030 deadline set for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its targets, and the standards set by the international human rights framework, seem far from reach. The global shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and yet provides an opportunity to build back better, for “better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life”.²

This publication is aimed primarily at consumer organizations, to support their work on food issues. It also seeks to highlight the importance of these organizations as partners towards transforming food systems that will secure the right to adequate food for all. In making these connections, it seeks to increase awareness of the human right to adequate food, so that it can be more broadly understood, incorporated into common language around the theme of rights and consumer behaviour, and form part of the capacity development of consumer organizations. Building on the achievements of these organizations globally, who already provide vital advice and protection, promotion and advancement of food rights, it provides a series of easy to reference tools to support and strengthen their impact. This publication forms part of a range of products designed by the Right to Food Team at FAO, and is accompanied by FAO training courses³ on the human right to adequate food and the extension of a community of practice, *Consumer Organizations in Action*, showcasing work on issues relevant to the right to food around the globe.

The challenge

Although the right to adequate food has formed part of international human rights law for decades, malnutrition nonetheless persists. After declining for some years, hunger has been on the increase globally since 2014.⁴ In 2019, more than 690 million men, women and children did not have enough food, and around 2 billion people were suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity,⁵ despite the fact that there is enough food produced worldwide to feed the entire global population. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is rising in all age groups and across all regions of the world, and incidences of related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, are also on the increase, contributing to millions of deaths worldwide annually. At the same time, healthy diets are too expensive, and it is estimated that more than 3 billion people cannot access them.⁶ Current food systems are not working and environmentally unsustainable production methods together with unhealthy diets are having vast economic impact through excessive costs to health and the environment.⁷

Global inequalities, climate emergencies and conflicts, exacerbated by demands on ever-diminishing resources, make food security and nutrition much more challenging. COVID-19, the first truly global virus in a century, has intensified the already precarious situation of rising inequalities and increased malnutrition,



and is pushing tens of millions more people into hunger.⁸ Lockdowns, care responsibilities, sickness and fear are making farming and trade more difficult, with cultivation and harvesting frustrated, markets closed, and retail and food services reduced, while border closures or additional checks prevent or delay the transportation of goods. In addition, concern about potential food shortages at the local level has led some consumers to stockpile food products, which can end up as food waste and cause temporary food shortages for others. There is need for decisive and collaborative actions⁹ to stop the COVID-19 health crisis turning into a major global food crisis.

The importance of consumers

It is clear that significant change to food systems and to consumption habits is needed. Consumer organizations are part of the solution and must be included as fundamental partners for driving this change. This publication looks towards a post-COVID-19 recovery, and supports the premise that current food systems, and consumer and food industry behaviour, can be transformed, using the opportunity to incorporate equitable and sustainable development based on human rights principles that put people first, to accelerate a real and lasting recovery that leaves no one behind.

With the right information, knowledge and incentives, consumer behaviour can impact positively upon the achievement of the right to adequate food for all. Raising the awareness of consumers, in the right context, can empower them to make choices that will aid a transformation of food systems, generating social, economic, cultural and environmental good practice, to influence policy and legislation that will drive a sustainable course. Consumer behaviour not only **responds to**, but also **contributes** to the way food is produced, processed, distributed, marketed, consumed and wasted; as such, responsible consumption, combined with responsible private sector action, greater governance, and political and fiscal incentives, can carve the way for sustainable, ethical and fairer development.

The UN Declaration on the Right to Development, of December 1986, states that everyone is: "...entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized."¹⁰

Equal opportunity to access food is included at Art. 8 of the Declaration.



1 HUMAN RIGHTS FOR CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS

Consumer organizations¹¹ reach out to millions of people globally. Much of their work concerns food issues, such as food safety and food hazards, its affordability, nutritional content, food labelling, access to markets, retail and publicity, food origins, food waste and consumer redress when food causes harm. Engaging consumer organizations in human rights discourse and developing capacity in relation to the right to adequate food, what it means and how consumers can further its achievement, can have a vast multiplier effect, which can strengthen responsible consumption for healthy diets and contribute towards better food systems.

In this section, the international human rights framework will be examined, with particular reference to the right to food. The intention is to build on the human rights knowledge of consumer organizations, equipping them with additional tools – grounded in international law and aligned with countries' international commitments and domestic contexts – to strengthen messaging, campaigns, advocacy and policy dialogue; and bringing human rights awareness closer to consumers.

1.1 What are human rights?

Human rights are inherent to all people: they belong to everyone equally, and regardless of any differences. They are set out in a collection of international standards, agreed upon by nations, that all countries should aspire to meet.

1.2 The United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The United Nations (UN) Charter and the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** are fundamental documents relating to the international community and its work in human rights, peace and security. They are a good starting place for examining human rights and can provide a helpful backdrop to the more specific international human rights treaties subsequently developed. Both these documents can be accessed online.¹²

THE UN CHARTER

The United Nations was created in 1945 in the aftermath of the Second World War,¹³ in recognition of its atrocities and the need to build a new world order, based on the fundamental principles of human rights. The UN Charter is like a 'launch document'. It was signed by **51 UN founder member states¹⁴ from around the world with the aim to safeguard peace and international security through international cooperation, resolving international problems of economic, social, cultural or humanitarian type and promoting respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all regardless of race, sex, language or religion.** All member states signing up to the UN make this promise to work collectively to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The most recent state to sign the UN Charter was South Sudan in 2011.¹⁵

While over the centuries there have been various meaningful commitments and treaties to principles of freedom, equity and social solidarity, it was really during the last century, with the creation of the UN,¹⁶ and the adoption of the UDHR in 1948, that countries came together to formally establish that human rights belong to all of us equally and that States have the duty to guarantee these rights.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly as: “a common standard of achievement **for all peoples and all nations**, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive **by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms** and by progressive measures, national and international, to **secure their universal and effective recognition and observance**, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction”.¹⁷

The UDHR¹⁸ affirms in its first article that each one of us is born free and equal in dignity and rights. The international community, which is currently made up of 193¹⁹ member states of the United Nations, upholds this guarantee. Human rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled (see section 3.3). It is therefore important to continuously develop capacity and raise general awareness about what human rights are, how they can be achieved and what this means in practice. A summary of the rights established in the 30 articles of the UDHR are set out in Annex 1 of this report. Available in full online,²⁰ it is widely accessible, and has been translated into more than 500 languages.

Human rights are universal, interdependent and interrelated and indivisible. The principle of equality and non-discrimination applies throughout, meaning that these rights are always to be respected in relation to everyone, regardless of differences. While human rights establish obligations on States (see section 2.3), and give entitlements to citizens, they also suggest responsibilities on the part of all of us to stand up for the rights of each other.²¹

- **Universal** – there is equal entitlement to these rights;
- **Interdependent and interrelated** – each right relates to another and all rights should be respected to ensure full protection;
- **Indivisible** – one right cannot be enjoyed to the prejudice or ignorance of another.

DID YOU KNOW?

10 December is celebrated each year as **International Human Rights Day**.



1.3 A human rights-based approach for consumer organizations

“When we take a human rights-based approach to development, the outcomes are more sustainable, powerful and effective.”

Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General²²

The very nature of consumer rights in relation to food, and the role of consumer organizations in protecting these rights, lends itself to the incorporation of a human rights-based approach. Consumers are rights-holders and consumer organizations are their legitimate representatives, basing much of their campaigning, advocacy and awareness-raising work around food-related issues.

A human rights-based approach helps to ensure that the rights of all are respected, protected, promoted and **remedied**. It shifts the balance from needs to entitlements, and includes ensuring adequate redress for those whose rights are violated and guaranteeing rights such as the right to decent work, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to adequate food, as well as preventing discrimination throughout. Consumer organizations are best placed to determine their optimum entry points for engagement to defend and advance consumer rights depending on their local context, but applying a rights-based approach can add weight, power and legal grounds to consumer action and greater effectiveness for transformed food systems.

“A human rights-based approach requires not only addressing the final outcome of abolishing hunger, but also proposing ways and tools by which that goal is achieved. Application of human rights principles is integral to the process” – *The Right to Food Guidelines*.²³

Applying a human rights-based approach (HRBA)²⁴ puts people and their dignity first and emphasizes the principles of participation and inclusion, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law. It sets out the relationship between duty bearers (those that are charged with upholding rights) and rights-holders (those entitled to have their human rights met). It applies a human rights lens to all actions related to political, civil, economic, social, cultural and environmental progress, to facilitate equitable and inclusive development which leaves no one behind.

The UN Common Understanding on HRBA

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) means ensuring the respect, defence and promotion of human rights throughout all actions and all sectors. In 2003, the UN adopted the UN Statement of Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming. This ‘Common Understanding’ requires human rights standards, instruments and principles to be applied across all UN development cooperation regarding programming, policies and technical assistance. The aim is that all cooperation should further the realization of human rights, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, and should contribute to developing the capacities of ‘duty-bearers’ to meet their obligations and/or of ‘rights-holders’ to claim their rights.

For further information see: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

Applying a human rights-based approach recognizes the universality of human rights, and that they are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. This means that when one right is protected it will impact positively upon the progress of another right; however, if a right is violated or deprived this will also have multiple adverse effects upon others.

All consumption has an impact somewhere along the food chain, somewhere around the world, and the aim on balance is to make this impact more positive for more people.

Raising awareness, educating about human rights and entering into multi-stakeholder dialogue holding human rights principles as preeminent can have impacts which improve the rights of others. Empowering consumers through raising awareness about how consumer behaviour can either improve people’s human rights or contribute to human rights violations may mean that consumers change their behaviour to support actions that lead to better nutrition and health for them and their families; decent work for those laboring in the food industry, in all countries; fair trade and non-exploitative market systems; women’s empowerment and inclusion of the most marginalized; and improved food production practices, among multiple other possibilities.

Engaging consumer organizations in a human rights culture can also strengthen human rights systems themselves and support countries in showcasing where they have made human rights gains for their citizens. For example, the wealth of information and evidence that consumer organizations can tap into through their grassroots work in communities around the globe can be garnered and presented at multi-stakeholder consultations and high level fora, to inspire informed strategies, legislation and policy that can support more sustainable and responsible consumption. It can also feed into international human rights agendas, aiding countries’ feedback and reporting of results and impact in relation to meeting their right to food obligations – as such, they should always have a place at the table. Consumer organizations can use human rights knowledge to seek more effective state policies, or policy implementation, to ensure

DID YOU KNOW?

16 October
each year is
World Food
Day.



Paragraph 5 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 25 June 1993.²⁵

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

fulfilment of the right to food domestically, such as by pressing for the availability and adequacy of healthy diets in schools, ensuring that these comply with nutritional standards and are safe; seeking government subsidy or incentive schemes to promote the consumption of healthy foods, or measures to tax unhealthy foods or sugary drinks; or by seeking fair prices for all to be able to buy or access healthy foods.

Finally, by placing consumer rights within the wider human rights framework, consumer organizations can empower consumers with knowledge of human rights principles and how these can be applied to all parts of the food environment, to secure respect for the human rights of all along the food chain; empowering women and girls; actively preventing discrimination of any kind; promoting equal access to land, fair pay and decent work, and equitable means of production in all countries; and seeking the application of ethical business practices by those from whom consumers choose to buy. As consumers' relationships with rights are boosted through technology and the information age, as the global becomes almost local, consumers can play a vital part in driving the right to adequate food for all through their actions and the choices they make. Likewise, consumer organizations can add pressure for a HRBA to be more stringently applied to the private sector in relation to industry, trade and investment.

In September 2017, in El Salvador, Latin American and Caribbean consumer organizations came together to promote adequate food in the region. Each was signatory to the "Declaration of the 2017 Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Consumers Organizations for the Promotion of Adequate Food",²⁶ which called for governments to take action towards the guarantee of the right to food for all, including the establishment of sustainable food systems for healthy foods, the adoption of a front of pack food labelling system, the restriction of the marketing of foods and drinks to children and the taxation of unhealthy sugary drinks.



2 THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

While consumer organizations frequently work on issues that support the achievement of the right to adequate food, not all consumers are aware of what this right actually means. In fact, consumer priorities in relation to food, such as whether it is safe, has a fair price, its availability, how it is marketed and its nutritious content, are closely related to advancing the realization of this right.²⁷

The right to adequate food for all people everywhere is an essential component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and of the right to health. It was first recognized in **Article 25** of the UDHR in 1948, which establishes, *inter alia*:

“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...”²⁸

Since then, the right to adequate food has been reinforced by several other international instruments, both legally binding and non-legally binding. A non-exhaustive list²⁹ of these and the status of their ratification in relation to binding instruments³⁰ can be found in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. International binding commitments relevant to the Right to Adequate Food and level of ratifications³¹

TREATY	LEVEL OF RATIFICATIONS
1 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966	171 States Parties
2 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979	189 States Parties
3 Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	196 States Parties
4 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951	146 States Parties
5 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006	180 States Parties
6 Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2008	26 States Parties

2.1 The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The right to food is enshrined in **Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1966.³²

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966

Article 11:

1. 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 co-operation based on free consent.
2. The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the **fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger**, shall take, individually and through international cooperation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:
 - a) To **improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems** in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;
 - b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, **to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies** in relation to need.

The ICESCR is binding on all its States Parties³³ and recognizes as fundamental the right to be free from hunger. Seen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this means that in the face of rising food insecurity, governments need to provide food relief. Article 11 also imposes a progressive duty to ensure that the economic, social and environmental conditions are established so that people are able to feed themselves and their family in dignity.

The right to adequate food is subject to progressive realization. The concept of **progressive** realization is established in Article 2 of the ICESCR:

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966

Article 2:

1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, **individually and through international assistance and co-operation**, especially economic and technical, to the **maximum of its available resources**, with a view to **achieving progressively the full realization of the rights** recognized in the present Covenant by **all appropriate means**, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.

Progressive realization of the right to food means that while governments should provide immediate emergency hunger relief, or food aid, in times of disaster, shock or crisis, they must also adopt appropriate legal and policy measures, frameworks and infrastructure to facilitate long-term food security and nutrition. This means also ensuring sufficient budgetary allocations to the maximum of available fiscal and other resources. States are encouraged to seek international assistance and cooperation to support achievement of the right to adequate food for all citizens, and should establish and maintain social protection systems, such as social security, to protect those people who cannot provide for themselves. States must ensure that effective legal mechanisms exist for redress where human rights, including the human right to food, are violated.

2.2 General Comment 12

In order to better interpret what the right to adequate food actually means in practice, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)³⁴ – a UN Committee of experts tasked to monitor

implementation and explain the scope of economic, social and cultural rights contained in international human rights law – issued **General Comment 12**:³⁵

“The right to adequate food is exercised when every man, woman or child, alone or in common with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or the means to procure it.”³⁶

General Comment 12 is worth examining in full.³⁷ It reiterates the principle of non-discrimination – the right to food applies to everyone, everywhere and equally. It refers to food being not only economically accessible to everyone (which speaks to fair pricing, as well as an adequate standard of living, so that people may have sufficient income/land/access, to purchase/procure by other means) but also **physically accessible** at all times. This relates directly to the concept of sustainability: a continuously producing and available food supply requires it to ultimately be sustainable. It also considers **‘adequacy’** and what this means in relation to the right to food.

Whether food is adequate or not relates to a number of variables relevant to the work of consumer organizations, such as:

- Food **safety** – is food sufficiently safe for consumption?
- Its **nutritional quality** – does the food provide enough nutritional sustenance depending on the needs of the consumer?
- Its **quantity** – is there enough of the nutritious food to satisfy the physiological needs of the consumer?
- Its **cultural acceptability** – is the available food acceptable or culturally appropriate to the consumer’s needs and customs?

General Comment 12:

The Committee considers that the core content of the right to adequate food implies:

- The availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture;
- The accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights.³⁸

The right to adequate food is a legal right which requires an enabling environment if it is to be properly met. This relates to food security, healthy diets and consumer priorities:

- Nutritious food must be **available**, in sufficient quantity, appropriate and safe in quality. This speaks to food production, domestic and import capacity, supply and storage, as well as food safety and hazards, subsistence farming, agro-ecology, cultivation, markets, retail and purchasing.
- All people – women, men, girls and boys – must have permanent **access** to food for a healthy and nutritious diet, according to their needs, without discrimination of any kind. They must be able to afford food, have access to the means to feed themselves or access food even during disasters. This speaks to sufficiency of food and fairness of food prices, purchasing power and available infrastructure and food aid.
- The **use** of food through adequate healthy diets, clean water, sanitation and health care needs, to ensure a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met. This speaks to nutrition, health, quality and hygiene, as well as the use of food and avoiding food waste.
- There must be food **stability** or long-term sustainability and security of food – people must not be at risk of losing access to food at times of climate, economic or other shocks, droughts or other cyclical

events. This speaks to infrastructure, innovation, traditional and alternative farming methods, but also climate, social and political stability.³⁹

2.3 The obligations on States

Human rights establish duties or obligations and rights or entitlements. People are **rights holders** and States are **duty bearers**. Under the ICESCR, States⁴⁰ have the legal obligation to guarantee the right to adequate food without discrimination. This means they must:

- **Respect** existing access to adequate food and not take any measures that could prevent such access. This includes, for example, preventing forced evictions or contamination of productive land.
- **Protect** the full realization of the right to food by taking steps so that people are not deprived of this right, including by the private sector or others. This includes ensuring food safety and quality and access to healthy diets.
- **Fulfil (provide and facilitate)** the right to adequate food by taking all necessary steps to create an environment that strengthens people's access to and use of resources, and the means to ensure their livelihoods, as well as providing food in emergency situations to relieve hunger.⁴¹ This includes, for example, social protection and agrarian policies for food security, improving nutrition in relief programmes, and inclusive food security, nutrition and development processes.

States must also ensure the effective enforcement of this right at the national level, using maximum available resources.

2.4 In support of implementation

Many countries have developed and adopted legislation to support the right to adequate food. This may be in the form of constitutional amendments and/or national laws – at least 30 countries worldwide have explicitly enshrined the right to food in their constitutions,⁴² while other national strategies, policies and programmes also aim at the fulfilment of this right for all. Despite this progress, implementation can be ineffective or insufficient. The work of consumer organizations on food issues strengthens implementation of this right, while their wide networks of consumers can provide vital information as to the effectiveness of implementation at the most local of levels.

The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2008 provides a complaints procedure – a mechanism for individuals or groups of people whose treaty-protected rights have been violated⁴³ to lodge a complaint for consideration by the CESCR (Art.2). States may also submit inter-State communications to report violations by another State party (Art.10), or in the case of systematic and grave violations, the CESCR itself may open up an inquiry process with a State (Art.11).⁴⁴

Consumer organizations are important partners supporting implementation of food rights. There are online tools⁴⁵ that show which international human rights instruments a country has ratified, or the 'status of ratification'. These can be accessed by all, including consumer organizations who can even register to receive email updates on treaties deposited with the Secretary General.⁴⁶ By reviewing the international commitments a country has made, legal obligations can be determined. A corresponding review of national legislative and policy measures (often facilitated by online tools – see recap box below) that comply with international right to food obligations can help to determine implementation, which in turn can support advocacy on food issues. The participation of consumer organizations in national food security and nutrition strategies also brings specialist and extensive consumer expertise and information to the decision-making table, which in turn can boost implementation.

Knowledge of the national legal status of the human right to food and the level of implementation can be useful tools for consumer organizations to strengthen their campaign materials; for capacity development;

when lobbying parliament, government or specialist agencies; or even to support legal action in defense of consumers. Consumer organizations can also seek to engage with international, regional or national human rights mechanisms, such as national human rights institutions (NHRIs), that may be mandated to monitor the right to food, or UN bodies such as the CESCR,⁴⁷ Special Procedures⁴⁸ such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food⁴⁹ and the Universal Periodic Review.⁵⁰ Monitoring of implementation is vital for effective achievement of rights. The capacity of consumer organizations to tap into a wide and diverse consumer network to obtain feedback on a variety of food related issues as they impact consumers means that consumer organizations can also play an essential role in monitoring. Equipped with the right know-how, they can provide important contributions as part of civil society mechanisms, for example giving inputs for shadow reports⁵¹ to strengthen reporting on a country's achievements and gaps against its international commitments. Further information about each of these human rights mechanisms can be found online⁵² and more information about the national legislative commitments of countries in relation to the right to adequate food can also be easily accessed online.⁵³

Brief recap on the right to food

- The **Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948** sets out the rights that belong to all people.
- The right to food is contained within this declaration at **Article 25**. Subsequently in the **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, which came into force in 1975, the right to food is established at Article 11.
- General Comment 12 is the authoritative explanation of what the right to adequate food means.
- To date, **171 States** have ratified this treaty and accepted its articles as binding regulations.

This imposes obligations upon a ratifying state to adopt measures to fulfill this right using the maximum of its available resources, for all its peoples. In so doing it has the obligation not to discriminate, to respect, to protect, to facilitate and to make effective this human right for all.

Ask yourself: has your country ratified the ICESCR? What domestic legislation on food rights does your country have? What is your network of consumers saying about implementation?

Consider online resources to support this work, e.g. the online legal and policy checking tools developed by FAO – at The Right to Food around the Globe: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food-around-the-globe/en/>; and FAOLEX: <http://www.fao.org/faolex/en/>

The next section looks at making connections with some of the relevant non-binding or voluntary instruments that consumer organizations can access to raise awareness and support countries in meeting their right to food commitments. There are a variety of these, and for the purposes of this publication, only a small selection has been included.





3 PERSUASIVE VOLUNTARY INSTRUMENTS RELATING TO CONSUMERS AND THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

A range of global or regional declarations, guidelines, resolutions and recommendations on the right to food have been developed over the years. These often cover gaps in existing international law or lend their support, explain and give impetus to existing binding agreements. Known as non-binding (or voluntary) instruments, they lay down persuasive guidance, principles and even 'moral' obligations on States. They may be adopted or followed by countries and are often drawn up at their request.⁵⁴ In addition to supporting national actions for improving human rights and the rule of law, these instruments also make helpful recommendations to which civil society, consumer organizations and the private sector can refer. Several of these specifically provide guidance in the achievement of equitable and sustainable development to eliminate hunger, malnutrition and poverty. It is important to raise general awareness of these instruments in order to build knowledge and capacity, and support campaigning and advocacy. Making such connections to a diverse range of voluntary tools can strengthen the consumer voice and drive rights-based transformations. They can be accessed online and a selection of those relevant to consumer organizations and the right to food are listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2. International persuasive guidelines relevant to the Right to Adequate Food

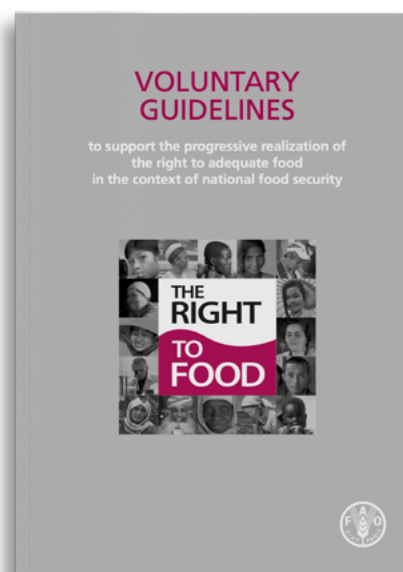
A selection of non-binding instruments supporting the right to adequate food includes:

- Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948
- Codex Alimentarius, 1963
- Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, 1974
- United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection, 1985 (revised 2015)
- The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes, 1985
- UN Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986
- Rome Declaration on World Food Security, 1996
- Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security, FAO, 2004
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007
- UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, 2011
- CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, 2012
- Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, 2014
- CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems, 2014
- Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action, 2014
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas, 2018
- CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, 2021

The following sections of this publication will briefly highlight those instruments of most interest to consumer organizations and the right to adequate food.

3.1 The Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security

Following a two-year process of negotiations and dialogue among experts and stakeholders including governments and civil society, *The Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security*⁵⁵ were adopted by consensus of FAO member countries in 2004 to provide clear guidance as to how countries can meet their legally binding obligations as parties to the ICESCR. Commonly known as the **CFS-Right to Food Guidelines**, they set out 19 practical and guiding policy actions, based in human rights and serving as a blueprint for the progressive achievement of the right to adequate food for all through sustained food security and nutrition.



3.1.1 How the Right to Food Guidelines relate to the work of consumer organizations

The CFS-Right to Food Guidelines have inspired right to food legislation and policy around the world, including explicit constitutional protection, right to food framework laws, national food security and nutrition action plans, and other multi-stakeholder and multi-sector initiatives. They are also referenced in the work of international human rights mechanisms and have led on to the subsequent adoption of voluntary guidelines by FAO member countries.⁵⁶ They are a useful reference and evaluation tool for stakeholders, such as consumer organizations, for guidance on consumer education and information, participation and behaviour, and can help in measuring a country's performance in relation to whether the right to food is being progressively realized.⁵⁷

For consumer organizations, all 19 of the Guidelines merit more detailed examination. They can be found in summary form and as they relate to consumers in Annex 2. They can also be accessed in full online, together with FAO methodological toolboxes⁵⁸ and capacity building courses⁵⁹ that can aid consumer organizations to include them as tools in their work. Of the 19 CFS-Right to Food Guidelines,⁶⁰ the following may be considered of particular interest:

- **Guideline 4 on Market Systems**, whereby consumer organizations can find support for their work protecting consumers from fraudulent practices, and promoting corporate social responsibility and greater access to markets, especially for those in situations of vulnerability;
- **Guideline 6 on Stakeholders** encourages wide participation in multi-stakeholder and multi-sector consultations; consumer organizations can bring to the table their experience, expertise and representation of a diverse and extensive consumer network;
- **Guideline 9 on Food Safety and Consumer Protection** supports consumer organizations in their work to strengthen the implementation of food safety standards, including the Codex Alimentarius, food labelling and other food controls to protect consumers;
- **Guideline 10 on Nutrition** lends itself to consumer organizations' work on nutrition and health awareness, including promoting breastfeeding, where possible, and a healthy diet;
- **Guideline 11 on Education and Awareness Raising**, which consumer organizations can use to support capacity development towards the informed consumer, their participation in food policy decision-making and to empower consumers to claim their rights;
- **Guideline 12 on National Financial Resources**, whereby consumer organizations can provide important information on how budget cuts impact food access, such as in their work on food pricing and the cost of a basic food basket;

- **Guideline 13 on Support for Vulnerable Groups**, whereby consumer organizations can be an important voice for the excluded and marginalized through their consumer outreach, provide information on healthy diets and support effective and transparent national accountability systems;
- **Guideline 17 on Monitoring, Indicators and Benchmarks**, whereby consumer organizations can engage a broad network of consumers to report on issues which may impact national efforts to secure the right to adequate food, including, for example, food safety issues, inappropriate marketing to children, exploitative market practices (such as around pricing and scarcity of goods) or collusion to increase market prices;⁶¹ and
- **Guideline 18 on National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)**, whereby consumer organizations, given their broad consumer outreach, can be encouraged to seek engagement with NHRIs, to feed into reporting and action around implementation of the right to food.

Today the CFS-Right to Food Guidelines remain as relevant as ever,⁶² and can be adapted to be applied to changing priorities and contexts. Implementing the Guidelines can support countries towards meeting the SDGs,⁶³ as well as in meeting their climate commitments within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁶⁴ and the Paris Agreement obligations (see sections 5 and 6), for example regarding actions that can lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Simple ways to support countries in implementing the right to food at the national level are suggested in Annex 3. Consumer organizations can consider engaging with any of these processes to boost national action for food rights for all consumers. The right to adequate food can only be fully implemented if people are informed about their rights and entitlements, aware of recourse mechanisms and able to claim their rights. Consumer organizations enjoy the broad trust of a wide and diverse network of consumers, and this access to consumers provides an opportunity to empower through information about rights and entitlements. It also gives consumer organizations the legitimacy to feed into national dialogue on issues of consumer importance, including the degree of implementation of the right to food at the national level, as well as to propose actions which can strengthen policy and legislation based on widespread consultation. Partnering up with national or international food security and nutrition platforms can give a voice to many, and provide expertise and evidence to inform more effective policy.

Effective laws and strategies are necessary both for consumer protection and to guarantee the right to food. The specialized technical experience of consumer organizations and their capacity to represent the views and experience of millions of people can provide important evidence for policy and legislative development, as well as help to raise public awareness. This can lead to more legitimate and impactful legislative change that also considers consumer priorities in laws that affect people's food rights, such as in the areas of food security and nutrition; school feeding and healthy diets; climate change; inclusive rural development and sustainable agriculture.

3.2 Supporting greater private sector accountability

Consumers can make demands of products because they buy or acquire them in exchange for money or other goods or services. Without the spending/trading power and confidence of consumers, business and trade would not be profitable. For economies to thrive they depend on consumers, so when consumers demand greater food safety, availability, affordability, access and stability in all corners of the globe, it not only improves achievement of the right to adequate food, but can strengthen sustainable development and further people's rights. However, consumer behaviour is also influenced and affected by industry behaviour. While there is much about consumer behaviour that needs to change, the practice of industry in the food systems of today must also be prepared to change, to adhere to tighter regulation wherever they are located, and be more accountable on the basis of their performance against stringently policed codes of conduct and practice that recognize and respect the dignity of all people and the obligation to meet their rights. As consumers gain more information and awareness of the international human rights framework, so must industry and the private sector build its capacity in human rights and be prepared to step up or face potential economic decline for failing consumer expectations.

ISO 26000:2010 on Social Responsibility was elaborated after five years of discussions between different stakeholders across the world, including governments, civil society, consumer organizations and industry. Consumers International played a key role in its development. It provides guidance on social responsibility in relation to businesses and organizations and shares best practices relating to social responsibility. It is aimed at all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size or location. For more information, see <https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html>

Consumer organizations all over the world are at the forefront of campaigns for more sustainable consumption, healthy diets and more responsible industry practices. There are a range of international voluntary frameworks that can strengthen the drive for greater private sector accountability, and which aim towards encouraging more responsible behaviour on the part of business towards both consumers and society at large; some of these are highlighted below.

3.2.1 The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection

The first international guidelines specifically aimed to protect consumers from harmful business practices, the **UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection** (UNGCP),⁶⁵ were adopted in 1985,⁶⁶ then expanded to include provisions on sustainable consumption in 1999, and revised and adopted by the UNGA in December 2015.⁶⁷ Also known as the UNCTAD Guidelines, they were drawn up by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) through a process of consensus and with the support of international experts, including consumer organizations such as Consumers International.

The UNGCP give legitimacy to the principles of consumer rights and provide practical support to countries for the development of effective national consumer protection legislation.⁶⁸ Governments are recommended to apply the UNGCP by invoking domestic legislation to protect all consumers, including the most vulnerable, and to expect and observe that business respects their application. The UNGCP identify 11 consumer needs that should be met in effective consumer protection legislation – these are set out in Annex 4, together with information on how meeting these needs can support achievement of the right to adequate food.

In summary, business is expected to always deal fairly and honestly with consumers, to avoid harmful practices and to make special provision for those in vulnerable situations and the disadvantaged. Consumers should receive accurate and honest information and be informed to help make good choices through knowledge sharing. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts for Consumer Protection Law and Policy (IGE), on which Consumers International has an observer role, was established by UNCTAD to monitor and support implementation of the UNGCP.⁶⁹

In **India**, a new Consumer Protection Act was passed in 2019, coming into effect in July 2020. The Act establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority charged with investigating consumer violations. It also extends penalties for adulterated goods, regulation over misleading advertisements and increased provision for consumer redress in case of breach in support of consumer complaints.⁷⁰

Zimbabwe adopted a specific Consumer Protection Act in December 2019, setting up a Consumer Protection Authority and Commission, rights for consumers and provision for redress.⁷¹

The existence of consumer protection legislation at country level can be an important entry point for securing food rights for all, and this is particularly important where human rights discourse may not be considered an effective tool. While the UNGCP are aimed at governments and business, they are also a helpful tool for consumer organizations as leverage to pursue consumers' food rights. The UNGCP can be accessed in full online,⁷² as can practical guidance as to their application for consumers, elaborated in 2016 by Consumers International.⁷³

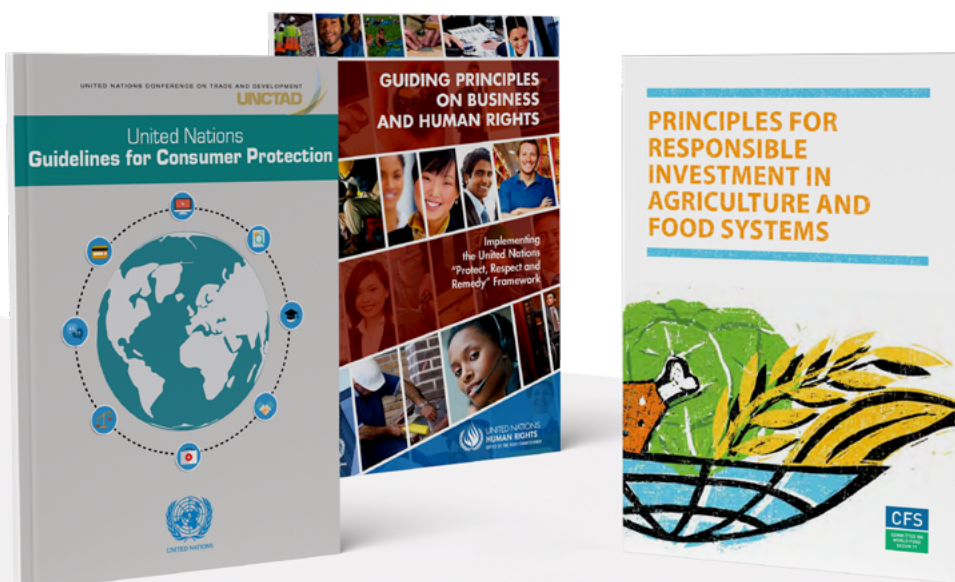
General Comment 24 of the CESCR was issued in 2017. It sets out additional guidance on the obligations of States under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in relation to business activities. It can be accessed in full online.⁷⁴

3.2.2 The CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems

The **CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems** (CFS-RAI Principles)⁷⁵ were developed through a multi-stakeholder process and are a valuable tool for consumer organizations as well as for business and governments. They recognize that better investment is needed to end hunger, all forms of malnutrition and poverty, and provide guidance on responsible or 'quality' investments for agriculture and food systems, effectively putting human rights at the centre of increased investments. They call for greater contributions towards equitable productivity, inclusive rural development and environmental sustainability. This includes the guarantee of rights such as the right to decent work, to an adequate standard of living, to **adequate food** as well as non-discrimination, and protection and support for the most vulnerable or marginalized. They specifically recommend that investments facilitate consumer choice, access and the availability of safe, nutritious, diverse and culturally appropriate food. Since consumers invest their money or goods when purchasing foods, they are key stakeholders, not only for the responsibility of their investments, but also in relation to the actions of business and governments regarding fair trade, equitable food systems and responsible agricultural investment. The CFS-RAI Principles can be used by consumer organizations in their campaigns, advocacy and negotiations with government and industry. If included in consumer education and awareness raising, such knowledge should lead to better informed consumers, may encourage more responsible consumer behaviour and can build pressure for more responsive and accountable food systems. The CFS-RAI Principles can be found in summarized form in Annex 5 and accessed in full online.⁷⁶

3.2.3 The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

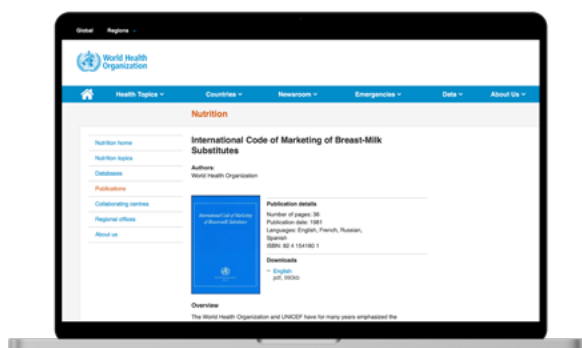
The **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**, developed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), were adopted in 2011⁷⁷ by the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC).⁷⁸ They are aimed at States and the private sector, providing important recommendations to **protect, respect and remedy**, in relation to human rights obligations and responsibilities in carrying out business, including in conflict zones. They specifically detail the obligation on States to protect human rights, the responsibility of business to respect human rights and the requirement that remedies be available and accessible in the case of breaches. As well as essential for the private sector, they are useful material for consumer awareness in terms of corporate responsibility and accountability. They are available online⁷⁹ and partially reproduced in Annex 6. Building up capacity around these guidelines will also help consumer organizations to strengthen their campaigns and advocacy, equipping them well for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector negotiations on food-related issues. Further information is accessible on the OHCHR website⁸⁰ and consumer organizations can even consider collaborations with NHRIs (Right to Food Guideline 18) to boost campaigning, raise awareness and to amplify the voice of consumers providing experiences from their networks of consumers.



3.3 Healthy diets and the importance of consumer action for the right to adequate food

Nutrition is a fundamental element of the right to adequate food and intrinsic to the human right to health. The right to adequate food includes “the right to.... **qualitatively adequate** and **sufficient** food....”,⁸¹ which speaks to both the quality and the quantity of food. To achieve the right to adequate food, the social, economic and cultural conditions must exist to ensure access to foods that are of nutritious benefit and of healthy content, so people must always have “physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and **nutritious** food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”⁸² In summary, nutrition is a vital part of food security: it contributes to the concept of ‘adequate food’ and relates to the quality and content of what we eat; it also relates to the right to the highest attainable standard of health, as set out in the UDHR, and subsequently adopted in the ICESCR (Articles 11 & 12).

General comment 12⁸³ of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) established that the right to food obliges every State to “ensure for everyone under its jurisdiction access to the minimum essential food which is sufficient, **nutritionally adequate** and safe, to ensure their freedom from hunger”, and **General Comment 14**⁸⁴ of the CESCR reaffirmed the nutrition dimension to health rights, with the express statement that nutrition is one of the ‘underlying determinants’ in the achievement of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.



Despite international recognition of the importance of nutrition, it is estimated that around 151 million children under the age of five are stunted, 2 billion people are suffering from some form or other of malnutrition and that the healthcare and loss of production costs of poor nutrition amount to trillions of USD per year.⁸⁵ In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, those who are starving, obese or have diet-related NCDs are considered more likely to die or suffer worsened outcomes from infection with the virus;⁸⁶ while maintaining a healthy diet is considered an important element for strengthening immune systems.⁸⁷

Consumer organizations carry out important work to help promote nutrition, from lobbying governments – for example on improved food labelling for nutrition, or to prevent the marketing of unhealthy foods towards children – to raising awareness and providing transparent, user-friendly information to influence consumer choices for healthy diets.⁸⁸ Transforming food systems so that healthy diets are available and accessible to all people means that consumer organizations must have a key role in discussions. The



process of the UN Food Systems Summit, 2021,⁸⁹ and its National pathways is one such forum where consumer organizations are contributing with their national consumer experience. The Summit's Action Tracks included⁹⁰ ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all.

Consumer organizations can find support for their campaigns on healthy diets from a range of international guidance and initiatives. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025),⁹¹ the Rome Declaration and the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, detailed below, provide recommendations for governments and other stakeholders that directly speak to consumers being better informed and aware of the health risks, the origins and the types of food systems related to their diets.

3.3.1 The Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action

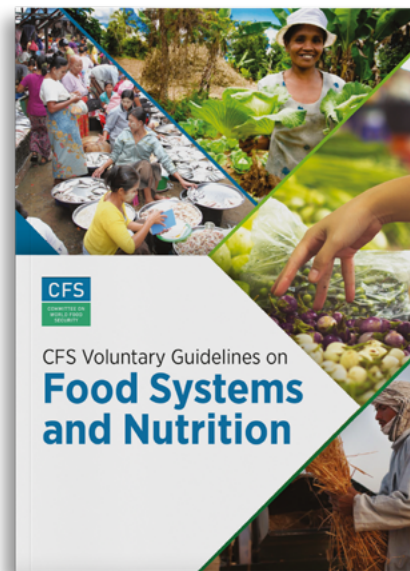
The **Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action** resulted from the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)⁹² in 2014, and was endorsed by more than 170 participating governments. It sets a framework for action on nutrition and commits countries to establishing national policies to eradicate malnutrition, transforming food systems to make healthy diets available to all. The Rome Declaration specifically calls on all actors – public sector, civil society, academia, private sector, industry and governments – to work together in order to drive healthy dietary habits and consumption.

The ten commitments made globally through the Rome Declaration on Nutrition 2014 in summary form are:

1. Eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition.
2. Increase nutrition sensitive investments.
3. Enhance sustainable food systems.
4. Raise the profile of nutrition with national strategies.
5. Strengthen human and institutional capacities.
6. Strengthen and facilitate contributions and action by all stakeholders.
7. Ensure healthy diets throughout life.
8. Create enabling environments for making informed choices.
9. Implement commitments through the Framework for Action.
10. Integrate vision and commitments into the SDGs.⁹³

3.3.2 The CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition

The **CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition**⁹⁴ were endorsed during the CFS 47th Session in 2021 and can be accessed online,⁹⁵ having benefited from five years of inclusive and widespread consultation.⁹⁶ Grounded in human rights, they contain specific reference to consumer protection, behaviour and people-centred nutrition knowledge and education as key to more sustainable food systems that will enhance food security, nutrition and health. They recommend an holistic approach across entire agri-food systems, providing a framework for greater policy coherence and coordination to guarantee healthy diets through sustainable food systems. Overall, they offer a comprehensive and transformative food systems approach to addressing malnutrition in all its forms and to support the achievement of the SDGs.



3.3.3 The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes

The **International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes**⁹⁷ was adopted by WHO in 1981 and became the first such code aimed at tackling concerns over the marketing of breast milk substitutes, ensuring its proper regulation and preventing negative impacts on children and infants. This Code is a good example of consumer pressure leading to industry regulation – its development was driven by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a coalition of civil society groups, including Consumers International, together with UNICEF and WHO. Campaigning included the organizing of consumer boycotts against companies marketing breast milk substitutes with advertising that targeted women, particularly in developing countries. Although the Code is not legally binding, it has weight as an international public health recommendation passed by the World Health Assembly.⁹⁸ Its implementation furthers the realization of the right to food for infants and young children, whose nutritional needs can be fully met through exclusive breast feeding, recommended for at least the first six months of a child's life. WHO monitors country implementation and IBFAN has an online system for registering or reporting breaches of the code by companies.⁹⁹ The adoption of this Code is an important achievement of consumer organizations in civil society alliances with the international community, and while its implementation by countries remains sporadic, it is necessary to continue to raise consumer awareness.

DID YOU KNOW?

15 March each year is **World Consumer Rights Day**.



3.4 Consumer organizations' engagement with food standards and safety

Consumer organizations are often extremely active and experienced in the area of food standards and food safety. This work is vital to the right to adequate food. The international food trade is worth around 2 000 billion dollars per year and billions of tons of food are produced, marketed and transported each year.¹⁰⁰ Each year, however, around 600 million people still become sick after eating contaminated food. Of these, nearly half a million people will die, including 125 000 children under the age of five.¹⁰¹ Food safety, standards and legislation to protect consumers are key to the enjoyment of the right to adequate food.



3.4.1 Codex Alimentarius

Often little known outside specialist circles, the **Codex Alimentarius**, or Food Code, is a set of internationally agreed standards, guidelines and codes of practice that exist to protect and promote the rights of consumers by ensuring that food is safe and can be traded.¹⁰² The **Codex System** was established in 1963 as a neutral body based on scientific advice. Standards are established and adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), the body of international independent experts created by WHO and FAO, “to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade,”¹⁰³ and basically cover all foods set for distribution to the consumer, including materials used for processing into foods. Standards are intended to be predictable, global, and to encourage confidence in the industry and trust by the consumer.¹⁰⁴

The Codex Alimentarius is not legally binding, however it can serve as a basis for domestic legislation governing food and is recommended for voluntary application by country members to facilitate the uniform application of safer and better standards throughout the food industry and in all countries. Where countries base their national standards on Codex recommendations, consumers should be able to trust these as safe and scientifically verified. The CAC is where countries come together, with the participation of civil society, to set international food safety and quality standards to protect consumer health and facilitate international trade. The standards adopted come from the expertise of scientists, policy-makers and consumers. There are currently more than 20 international consumer organizations accredited to the CAC.¹⁰⁵ These accredited organizations act as non-voting observers, are recognized as delegates and can participate and pass on the ideas and concerns of their members. Their contribution is crucial to the development of standards in line with consumer needs.

The Codex Alimentarius supports the right to adequate food by setting the standards to ensure that the food people eat is safe. It is an important tool that continues to be updated depending on developments in scientific and consumer knowledge, and that serves to protect consumers. The interaction of consumer organizations with the Codex Alimentarius helps to keep it responsive to consumer concerns and demands. Consumer input has been key to the development of Codex standards and to their application at the national level.

Guideline 9 of the **Right to Food Guidelines**, on Food Safety and Consumer Protection,¹⁰⁷ specifically recommends consumer participation in national coordinating committees for liaison with Codex.

DID YOU KNOW?

7 June each year is **World Food Safety Day**.¹⁰⁶



How do consumers participate in the work of the Codex Alimentarius?

Consumers International has been working with the Codex Alimentarius since 1965. Consumer organizations can receive the **Codex Documents** from the **Codex Alimentarius Secretariat** and make requests for information. There are Codex contact points in member countries who receive all Codex documents and are expected to disseminate these to nationally based consumer organizations for comment.

Both FAO and WHO consistently recommend the inclusion of consumers' representatives and their input in relation to proposed international food standards as well as food control activities within countries.¹⁰⁸

Consumer organizations can raise awareness and increase knowledge of Codex Alimentarius, and seek to give valuable input at the national level. The Codex Representative in government can be contacted to see how consumers can support through feedback or information sharing regarding food standards and Codex priorities. Consumer organizations can identify what their countries' national priorities are in relation to food safety issues, check them against existing food safety legislation, and then seek to put relevant information on the agenda of the Codex Contact Point for the country.¹⁰⁹ They can also seek to have a seat at sub-committees of the National Food Codex Commission and ask to be included in the list of recipients of draft standards.¹¹⁰ Consumers can access the electronic tools available at the Codex website,¹¹¹ where there is an online commenting system and a digital platform for working groups. Every Codex standard is stored digitally and made publicly available on the Codex website in multiple languages. All Codex documents, including working papers, information papers and meeting reports, are publicly available online. The Codex also has an E-learning course which consumers can access to learn more about engagement and its function.¹¹²

The Codex is an area in which organized consumers can have a voice and which demonstrates how consumer organizations can engage consumers and decision-makers in policy dialogue around food safety, and how effective they have been in working on international standards and contributing to setting international benchmarks to guide business and governments towards providing and regulating for better regulation to protect consumers.



The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is another type of standard setting body. It is an international non-governmental organization that brings civil society and experts together and has 164 national standards bodies as members. It has developed standards across industries, including on agriculture, food safety and healthcare. Many consumer organizations around the world have supported ISO's work in developing international food safety standards. For example, Consumers International was instrumental in the approval of a standard on access to water and sanitation, which has helped to increase consumer rights and improve industry practices.¹¹³ Consumers International also had a key role in the development of standard 'ISO 26000 – social responsibility'¹¹⁴ in 2010, which has been adopted by a number of high-profile businesses and organizations and for the past decade has set a bar for responsible corporate behaviour, including elements of human rights, labour rights and the environment.

More information on the work of ISO and its impact can be found online.¹¹⁵

Brief recap of section 3 on non-binding instruments and guidelines

- Multiple guidelines and codes have been produced that can support the implementation of the right to adequate food for all.
- Aimed at governments, the private sector and civil society, the materials are also highly relevant to all other stakeholders, especially consumer organizations working on food issues.
- Wide understanding and dissemination of these materials, through consumer outreach and engagement, can help raise public awareness and make processes more inclusive and transparent.

Consider:

- Can any of these guidelines or take away materials be brought into your campaigning and advocacy work?
- Are there platforms, forums or spaces for discussions that your consumer organization can participate in to provide evidence from the consumer?
- Can your organization use these materials to increase consumer awareness on food rights and influence consumer behaviour?

Check online for more information and seek to engage incorporating these tools where possible.¹¹⁶



4 THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – FUNDAMENTAL FOR CONSUMERS



Approved in 2015 by all 193 UN member states,¹¹⁷ the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for **'people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership'** that sets out the SDGs. It is guided by and grounded in respect for human rights, equality and the rule of law, establishing a vision for a world transformed by the elimination of extreme poverty and malnutrition in all its forms, **leaving no one behind**.¹¹⁸ There are 17 SDGs, with 169 targets, acting as guidelines for global action during the period 2016–2030. By agreeing to the SDGs, countries committed to achieving equitable and sustainable development for all.

Heading towards the 2030 deadline set by the SDGs, and in the face of the global challenges caused by COVID-19, it is ever more important to raise awareness and build momentum around these targets, which are not just for governments, but goals for all – private sector, consumers, civil society and others.

Collaboration, cooperation and collective action with all stakeholders around the table, including consumer organizations, is key so that no one is left behind in relation to global progress, but also that no one is left behind in finding the required solutions, and in contributing towards their achievement.

It is critical for the SDGs to form part of general education, including on the right to adequate food. SDG2 is known as the 'Zero Hunger goal'. It pledges to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and to promote sustainable agriculture. It sets targets for countries, including the achievement of a significant reduction in stunting and wasting by 2025, and by 2030: ensuring access to safe, nutritious and sufficient foods all the time; supporting equal access to productive resources, including land; increasing agricultural resilience; and maintaining the genetic diversity of ecosystems.¹¹⁹ In fact, each of the 17 SDGs also relates in some way to securing the right to adequate food, with the following goals being of particular relevance to consumers:

- **SDG1 – poverty reduction:** consumers boost economies and can contribute towards reducing the poverty of workers throughout the food system
- **SDG2 – zero hunger:** informed consumers can make purchases that support people in vulnerable situations and reduce hunger
- **SDG3 – good health and well-being:** consumers can choose healthier products with informed labelling
- **SDG5 – the empowerment of women and girls:** consumers can promote the economic and productive inclusion of women, and the education of girls through their purchases
- **SDG8 – sustainable economic development:** consumers can drive fairer trade practices and prices that lead to more equality and stronger economies
- **SDG12 – responsible consumption and production:** consumers can be mindful of what they purchase and how to reduce food waste and avoid food loss
- **SDG13 – climate change:** consumers' purchases can have a direct impact on the preservation or loss of environment and can influence carbon emissions.



Many consumer organizations already carry out actions which directly advance progress towards more equitable development and sustainable consumption. Incorporating the SDGs, as they relate to consumers and the right to adequate food, into their work can add weight to their campaigns. Developing SDG knowledge and awareness among their networks of consumers can empower consumers and foster changes to consumer behaviour. Furthermore, owning the SDGs and bringing them into policy dialogue with governments and private sector can all lend support to their achievement by 2030.¹²⁰ The SDG2 Zero Hunger targets are reproduced in Annex 7 and consumer organizations can find full information on all the SDGs, including campaign ideas, online.¹²¹



5 THE PARIS AGREEMENT – WHY CONSUMERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

Consumers are more aware than ever that climate change is becoming one of the gravest threats to livelihoods, food security and nutrition. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increased by intensive agriculture, deforestation, fishing, farming and livestock, in addition to other industrial sources of contamination such as plastics, chemicals and fossil fuels, are resulting in rising global temperatures and environmental devastation.¹²² Global warming is causing drastic changes to the planet's ecosystems, with more severe weather events and increasing occurrence and geographical range of disease and pests. Current models of food production and the food system are exacerbating the crisis.¹²³ Urgent climate action is needed if we are to reverse these trends and this means getting all consumers on board.

In December 2015, the **Paris Agreement** on Climate Change¹²⁴ was adopted with commitment on the part of countries to mitigate and combat climate change.¹²⁵ This agreement has huge relevance to protecting the planet's future, if countries keep to their pledges. Multi-stakeholder solutions are needed through policies, legislation and financing that can reduce carbon emissions and prevent increases in global temperatures, as well as build resilience and support innovation¹²⁶ towards mitigating the loss caused by climate change.¹²⁷ Consumer behaviour also needs to change to adapt to the climate realities of all countries and to help mitigate against further environmental devastation.

Many consumer organizations around the world already provide consumer education on the role consumers can have in combatting and mitigating climate change. Their campaigns show, for example, how consumers can reduce their carbon footprint, reduce plastics consumption, food and water waste, buy locally and organic, recycle and compost, generate their own urban or rural small holdings, and 'go green'.¹²⁸ Governments can motivate and reward responsible consumer behaviour, and step up to their own Paris Agreement commitments, through putting in place subsidies and incentives; making food systems more efficient; reducing loss and waste; regulating for informative and accurate labelling of food produce; promoting organic and local produce; investing in sustainable and alternative agriculture or agroecology; holding those contributing most to climate damage to account; implementing international agreements; and other measures. The Paris Agreement is an important opportunity for countries to reverse the current climate and environmental emergency, and consumer organizations can support this by including it as part of their campaigns and awareness raising strategies.

DID YOU KNOW?

22 April
each year is
Earth Day.



The Pesticide Action Network International (PAN) was founded in 1982, and is a network of over 600 participating NGOs, institutions and individuals in more than 90 countries. An example of successful action in support of ecology and the environment, Consumers International was a founder member promoting effective controls and safe alternatives to toxic pesticides and unethical marketing practices. PAN's work has contributed to securing regulations to prevent the export of banned or restricted pesticides without prior knowledge and consent.¹²⁹

PAN raises awareness and currently campaigns for a legally binding treaty to ban highly hazardous pesticides. It also produces materials such as *Replacing Chemicals with Biology: Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides with Agroecology*.¹³⁰



Brief recap of sections 4 and 5 on sustainable development

- The SDGs and the Paris Agreement are the most significant recent international agreements for countries to achieve better and fairer development, leaving no one behind.
- Countries are currently off track and consumer organizations can join the campaign for enhanced commitments and action at national level.
- Being familiar with international commitments and raising awareness of these among consumers will strengthen consumer messaging and can drive meaningful consumer action and awareness, while informing demands that can be made of the private sector engagements.

Find out more online: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>

How is your country doing? Check out the SDG Indicators and find out more at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> and <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/en/>



6 CONSUMERS AND FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

By 2050, feeding a global population of almost 10 billion will require a radical transformation in how food is produced, processed, traded and consumed. Feeding this expanded population nutritiously and sustainably will require substantial improvements to global, regional and local food systems so that they can provide decent employment and livelihoods for producers and every actor along the food chain, offer nutritious products for consumers, and do so without damaging our natural resources.¹³¹

Food systems are everything from 'farm to fork' – incorporating the production, distribution, marketing, consumption and disposal of food.¹³² Food systems also include how food is developed and prepared for consumption. They include the environment in which food is cultivated, the people working with it, the materials and processes employed, the infrastructure and institutions through which food moves, the distribution, the markets, its trade, its consumption and its disposal¹³³ – as well as consumer behaviour.

"The food environment refers to the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food". High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition Report 2017.

Food loss and waste amount to a major loss of global resources, including water, land, energy, labour and capital, and lead to GHG emissions, contributing to climate change.¹³⁴

Food loss: all that is lost from post-harvest through food production, processing and storage.

Food waste: all that is wasted by retailer or consumer (e.g. expired/wasted/ruined foods post-production use).

Excessive food loss and waste is endemic in contemporary food systems.¹³⁵ Vast amounts of natural resources are lost in the production of food, as well as throughout the food supply system, where it is estimated that approximately 14 percent¹³⁶ of food from post-harvest to before its retail or market is lost (this does not take account of retail and consumer waste). The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized these systemic problems – with the imposition of lockdowns resulting in harvesting crises for many farmers, and transportation difficulties and storage issues for traders and retailers, while food loss has been aggravated as markets face obstacles never before seen at global level. The impact of this has been most felt by those already most vulnerable. Such shocks highlight the need for a transformation of food systems towards a better functioning, fairer model. For the right to adequate food to be attained for all people everywhere, sustainable food systems will be required – economically, environmentally, culturally and socially equitable food environments, that guarantee access to healthy diets.

Sustainable food systems "are food systems that ensure food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition of future generations are not compromised."¹³⁷

The behaviour of consumers can strengthen the drive towards sustainable food systems through consumer choices and demands, which means that consumers need information, knowledge and incentives. Consumer awareness should encompass all elements of the food system, not just consumer behaviour or the choices made about where, what and how much food to acquire; how to prepare, cook, store and eat;¹³⁸ and how to dispose of food and its packaging. But also, the origins of food can be made more transparent, including in terms of the food supply chains in use, from its production, storage and distribution; its processing and packaging; and its retail and marketing.

If consumers have more information regarding the inequities of current food systems, and are empowered to assume a role in demanding more stringent measures from governments and the private sector for the responsible governance of food systems to ensure food and nutrition security, they can contribute to more sustainable and equitable livelihoods; environmental protection; the long-term eradication of hunger and poverty; and sustained rural development that prioritizes the needs of the poorest, of those producers living in the most vulnerable situations, such as the rural poor, women, Indigenous Peoples and youth.

Everyone, in some form or other, is a consumer, and as such there is tremendous potential for impact. If legislators and policy-makers facilitate sustainable food production and consumption, all those in the food supply chain – from producers to consumers, now and in the future – could benefit through better quality, safe and healthy diets, and improved livelihoods. Sustainable food systems need to ensure food safety and consumer protection, while guaranteeing human rights such as the right to food, the right to water and sanitation, the right to health, the right to education, the right to information and freedom of expression, the right to work and the right to life.¹³⁹ Consumer awareness and choice needs to be supported by legislation and policy, including better and more responsible governance with incentives and commitment, so that consumer choice is not negatively impacted by higher prices or scarcity of foods, and so that consumers can choose to buy from producers with a better environmental record, that offer decent work and fair pay, with healthier, more equitable, fairly traded and ethical produce. If harnessed and channeled properly by consumer organizations to decision-makers, then such consumer demands could contribute towards the transformation that food systems need.

Brief recap of section 6 - Food Systems transformation

- How the consumer can influence each element of the food system is highly important in any discussion of consumer capacity to impact the right to food;¹⁴⁰
- A consumer who knows more about the origins and the processes involved in the production of food could make responsible food choices, especially if additional incentives exist, such as on pricing or subsidies;
- These consumer choices will impact demand, which will ultimately lead to responses from producers and retailers.

See **Annex 8** for the FAO guide: '**Nine tips for reducing waste**'¹⁴¹ – this could help messaging for consumers. For additional ideas see: FAO Food Waste and becoming a Food hero – 15 quick tips: <http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1309609/>

Consumer organizations help to promote more sustainable food systems awareness among consumers, and have been prominent during local, national, regional and global forums, including at the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit and Summit of 2021¹⁴² and follow up to ensure that consumer voices are heard: <https://www.consumersinternational.org/what-we-do/consumer-protection/food/united-nations-food-systems-summit/>.



7 TAKEAWAYS

7.1 Consumer priorities based in human rights

By increasing understanding around the human rights principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law, and bringing this knowledge into all aspects of consumer behaviour, relating it to campaigns and participation with other stakeholders, consumers can positively influence increasingly fairer and more inclusive practices within the food system which will impact upon their rights and the rights of all. Consumer organizations can enhance consumer understanding of what it means to have the human right to adequate food realized and what they can do to contribute to its realization. Greater cooperation, collaboration and engagement with NHRIs and with UN agencies can support the strengthening of their capacities and the inclusion of their consumer outreach in trainings and evaluations. Consumers can make change happen. If equipped with adequate information, training and awareness in relation to human rights, in addition to their rights as consumers, the effect of the impact they already have will multiply. The more empowered consumers are, the more likely they can see themselves as agents for change beyond their individual consumption and towards that of all people, supporting achievement of the SDG targets and guaranteeing the right to adequate food.

7.2 Share knowledge and build capacity

Consumers look to consumer organizations to give them information they can trust from reliable and independent sources. This can aid learning about the impact of corporate behaviour, food systems and their consumption habits, and can support consumers to take a proactive role in their food choices. Informed food choices for sustainably-sourced healthy diets can positively impact consumer well-being; they can also impact upon whether governments meet their international commitments and whether the private sector acts responsibly. Ultimately, this will have longer-term impact on the sustainability of the planet, on economic growth and on political stability. Informed consumers can be a key to the realization of the human right to adequate food and sustainable development. It is important to educate and raise awareness among the whole community of consumers to demonstrate how consumer actions impact the human rights of others and can steer a path towards sustainable development. This is a crucial time for innovation, technological advance and mass information. These tools can support the empowerment of consumers with facts and evidence-based information to help shape understanding of healthy nutritional food habits and sustainable diets. Consumers are a vital partner if countries are to meet the Zero Hunger goal and other targets of the SDGs and reduce carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement commitments.

7.3 Transform food systems around rights and sustainability

Food systems need to change. The human right to adequate food means ensuring that all people everywhere have sufficient nutritious food, now and in the future. Transforming food systems to deliver on this guarantee is vital. The planet is at crisis point, and transformed food systems need to respond to consumer demands, as well as recognize the urgency to protect the environment and preserve natural resources for future generations in all regions of the world. Consumers' voices, through their choices and action, properly informed by and channeled through consumer organizations, can impact food systems to make them more equitable so that consumers everywhere are served, while at the same time the whole food environment is improved, including for its most vulnerable stakeholders. From the smallholder farmers and local subsistence fishers to the large and expansive corporations that make up the global food industry and all laboring within these; there must be lasting change in behaviour towards equality, rights and sustainability. This means a full examination of each element of the food system, from farm to fork, and how each stage can be improved. Innovative and equitable solutions must be found so that food

systems can be rights-based, more efficient, safer, fairer and sustainable for production today and for future generations.

7.4 Engage with multiple stakeholders

Consumer organizations have a wealth of experience and represent millions of diverse people from varied constituencies. They are global in their reach and have the participation and trust of communities around the world, in developed, developing and least developed countries, and even in conflict zones. They can produce important evidence of consumer behaviour. Their presence in multi-stakeholder and multi-sector platforms is essential at local, national, regional and global level.¹⁴³ They have expertise in a range of areas of consumer rights from legal advice and representation, through to campaigning, scientific research and testing, lobbying and advocacy. Their continued engagement is vital, and having their voices heard not just in the traditional settings of Codex, WHO, UNCTAD and World Trade Organization (WTO) fora, but also as a partner to FAO and others in development and human rights settings, national food security and nutrition action plans, and at other high level meetings, will contribute to stronger and more effective policy and legislative implementation and oversight. Through their broad consumer outreach, consumer organizations have the capacity for wide-scale monitoring, including of unfair market practices, price surges and food safety issues, as well as inappropriate marketing to children or misleading labelling. Effective coordination and partnership with public decision-makers, and other stakeholders such as academia, UN bodies and organizations, human rights institutions and the private sector, can call out breaches of economic, social or cultural rights and violations of domestic laws, as well as ensuring that the voice of consumers and their considerable and varied experience can have influence in finding sustainable development solutions that strengthen the right to adequate food and food security and nutrition.



ANNEX 1

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 1948

Article 1	All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood
Article 2	Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
Article 3	Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
Article 4	No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
Article 5	No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
Article 6	Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
Article 7	All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.
Article 8	Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.
Article 9	No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
Article 10	Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.
Article 11	(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.
Article 12	No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Every- one has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.
Article 13	(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
Article 14	(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
Article 15	(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.
Article 16	(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.
Article 17	(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18	Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.
Article 19	Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions with- out interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
Article 20	(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.
Article 21	(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.
Article 22	Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.
Article 23	(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
Article 24	Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.
Article 25	(1) 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. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
Article 26	(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
Article 27	(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.
Article 28	Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.
Article 29	(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society. (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
Article 30	Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

ANNEX 2

THE RIGHT TO FOOD GUIDELINES – SUMMARIZED AS THEY RELATE TO CONSUMERS

GUIDELINE 1	Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law	Link directly to this guideline Promote and safeguard a peaceful, stable and enabling economic, social, political and cultural environment, and safeguard democracy, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development and good governance. Empower citizens, ensure equal legal protection and due process.
GUIDELINE 2	Economic Development Policies	Link directly to this guideline Promote economic policies for food security and sustainable development, reduce hunger and poverty including non-discriminatory agriculture, fisheries, forestry and land use. Consider land reform policies, improve access to land, water, technologies, financial resources; include poor rural and urban communities.
GUIDELINE 3	Strategies	Link directly to this guideline Adopt transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory and comprehensive national strategies to combat hunger, reduce poverty and realize the right to food, addressing all aspects of the food system, including the production, processing, distribution, marketing and consumption of safe food. Ensure primary education for all, basic health care, clean drinking-water, adequate sanitation and justice.
GUIDELINE 4	Market Systems	Link directly to this guideline Protect consumers against fraudulent market practices, misinformation and unsafe food; encourage corporate social responsibility, and support non-discriminatory trade systems and markets, so that the food trade generates food security for all. Provide adequate social safety nets, protect the environment and public goods.
GUIDELINE 5	Institutions	Link directly to this guideline Improve institutions to contribute to the right to food, and build national intersectoral coordination mechanisms, include private and public participation and consultation, and those most affected by food insecurity. Ensure accountability and transparency with mechanisms for monitoring and review.
GUIDELINE 6	Stakeholders	Link directly to this guideline Bring together different stakeholders to find multidisciplinary solutions to food insecurity, involving all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, make optimum use of their experience and knowledge to facilitate the most efficient use of resources.
GUIDELINE 7	Legal Framework	Link directly to this guideline Bring in legislation to ensure the realization of the right to adequate food and consider administrative, quasi-judicial and judicial mechanisms to provide remedies. Ensure the public is informed. Strengthen laws so women have access to poverty reduction and nutrition security.
GUIDELINE 8	Access to Resources and Assets	Link directly to this guideline States should guarantee an adequate standard of living in rural and urban communities.
8a	Labour	Guarantee decent work in accordance with ICESCR, International Labour Organization (ILO) and human rights standards. Provide adult education classes to aid employment.

8b	Land	Protect equitable security of land tenure, give special attention to sustainability, conservation and the rights of Indigenous Peoples
8c	Water	Safeguard drinking water quality and ensure sustainable use and allocation of water access.
8d	Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Bring in policies, legislation and supporting mechanisms to ensure conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, protect traditional knowledge, facilitate equitable participation in resulting benefits, and seek participation of local and indigenous communities and farmers in national decision-making processes.
8e	Sustainability	Protect ecological sustainability and ecosystems, prevent water pollution, protect soil fertility, and promote the sustainable management of fisheries and forestry.
8f	Services	Support development of efficient food production by all farmers, particularly poor farmers, with private/public sector initiatives for innovative tools, technologies, research, extension, marketing, rural finance and microcredit.
GUIDELINE 9	Food Safety and Consumer Protection	Link directly to this guideline Establish food control systems to ensure food safety throughout the food chain, including using scientifically based (Codex) standards for food safety, and good practice in packaging, labelling and advertising of food. Consumer education and choice are championed with the recommendation to ensure appropriate information on food and recourse for any harm caused by unsafe food.
GUIDELINE 10	Nutrition	Link directly to this guideline Improve nutrition and dietary diversity, including food fortification. Promote healthy diets and exclusive breast feeding for infants. Provide education, information and labelling regulations, to prevent overconsumption and unbalanced diets leading to malnutrition, obesity and degenerative diseases. Consider the special nutrition needs of people in situations of vulnerability and cultural dietary requirements, ensuring participation and non-discrimination in policy and practice.
GUIDELINE 11	Education and Awareness Raising	Link directly to this guideline Promote education on these Guidelines, including food sustainability, nutrition, food safety, human rights, environment and agriculture for equal and informed participation in food-related policy decisions. Boost academic facilities in developing countries for science and agriculture-related disciplines and business. Empower civil society to participate in implementation of the Guidelines.
GUIDELINE 12	National Financial Resources	Link directly to this guideline Allocate sufficient budget and financial resources for zero hunger and food security. Ensure effectiveness of social protection and expenditure for food security of the most vulnerable, even at times of budget cuts. Ensure accountable and transparent spending and investment for food security.
GUIDELINE 13	Support for Vulnerable Groups	Link directly to this guideline Establish disaggregated Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS), identifying those most vulnerable to food insecurity and the underlying causes. Take targeted measures for food security, channeling support through women.
GUIDELINE 14	Safety Nets	Link directly to this guideline Establish social/food safety nets for the most vulnerable, build on community capacities, including local procurement to guarantee the right to food. Implement non-discriminatory support for food and nutrition security, including access to clean water, sanitation, health care and nutrition education.
GUIDELINE 15	International Food Aid	Link directly to this guideline Donor states must support national food and nutrition security plans; ensure food safety and adherence to international conventions and norms on food aid. Ensure participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation.

GUIDELINE 16	Natural and Human-Made Disasters	Link directly to this guideline Food must not be a weapon of war, or of political or economic pressure. In conflict, food and medicine must be guaranteed. Refugees/displaced persons must have adequate food, and the Geneva Convention must be respected. ¹⁴⁴ Establish early warning systems for natural/human-made disasters and emergency preparedness measures.
GUIDELINE 17	Monitoring, Indicators and Benchmarks	Link directly to this guideline Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Guidelines. Consider Right to Food Impact Assessments and benchmarks related to international commitments (e.g. SDGs). Monitor food security of vulnerable groups, and ensure full participation/consultation in evaluation process.
GUIDELINE 18	National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)	Link directly to this guideline Establish NHRIs. NHRIs should incorporate food insecurity monitoring and verification tasks and right to food in mandate. Encourage civil society organizations (CSOs) to contribute to monitoring activities undertaken by NHRIs relating to the right to adequate food.
GUIDELINE 19	International Dimension	Link directly to this guideline Consider all relevant international measures, tools, trade, aid, partnerships and international cooperation to support national efforts to secure the right to food and food and nutrition security.

ANNEX 3

SEVEN WAYS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD GUIDELINES

Right to food implementation actions recommended for states, depending on country context and capacity	Ideas for consumer organizations to support states' implementation action ¹⁴⁵
Identify the target group – states need to determine who are the food insecure (those most vulnerable to violation of this right). Who are the hungry, poor, marginalized groups?	Reach out to users, establish gaps and failures in implementation, where the strongest needs are based on consumer food issues. Feedback to policy-makers/ NHRI/UN etc.
Conduct a thorough assessment of the current situation - what laws, policies and institutions exist to support implementation? Are the maximum of available resources used to ensure this right? Where are the gaps?	Can you help identify where the obstacles to implementation of laws relating to food rights for consumers are? Does existing consumer protection/ right to food legislation provide adequate protection in relation to food issues?
Elaborate a Food Security Strategy – recognize that the right to adequate food for all is a state obligation. Food should be culturally appropriate, nutritious, affordable and locally available in a sustainable way. Adopt strategies for access, availability, use and stability, with actions to bring in the most excluded, considering non-discrimination, gender empowerment and anti-racist systemic analysis and guarantees to empower all.	Are there ways to participate and contribute to national food strategies on behalf of consumer food issues, considering the wide outreach to diverse consumers? Consider ways to secure a place at the national/regional/global table to ensure all consumer voices are heard.
Allocate obligations and responsibilities – ensuring transparency, accountability and clarity of roles. The state needs to consider where gaps can best be filled through coordinated, cohesive action that doesn't leave different agencies competing for funds. A food security and nutrition coordinating body can be a good mechanism.	Can your network of consumers provide any feedback as to levels of coordination and collaboration in relation to food issues (food safety, availability, nutrition action etc.)? Is state information accessible? Can you secure a place with civil society organizations (CSOs) on a national or local coordinating body?
Create a legal framework – there must be legal mechanisms that ensure the right is guaranteed for all always, ideally enshrining the right to food in domestic law and raising citizen awareness of this and the awareness of legal practitioners, including public officials, judges etc.	Can you raise awareness of legal mechanisms for redress among consumers? Can right to food legal provisions strengthen your claims for redress or action on food rights? Consider including human rights in consumer campaigns on food issues.
Monitor implementation. This should include provision for data collection agencies to collate disaggregated data (gender, race/ethnicity, age, disability, income etc.) on the national situation in terms of hunger, obesity or food insecurity.	Can your organization access data/information that could help? Consider reaching out for feedback from diverse networks of consumers on food issues to provide evidence on implementation and gaps; liaise with CSOs, NHRIs and UN agencies.
Ensure mechanisms for redress/recourse, ensuring access to information, providing recourse to those whose rights are violated and complying with legal orders, as well as reporting regularly on the food security situation in human rights reports to highlight improvements, or seek international cooperation or support to remedy violations.	Familiarize consumers with redress and recourse mechanisms. Consider liaising with CSOs to contribute to shadow human rights reporting on the national/local food situation, based on consumer food experiences. Connect with other UN agencies and NHRIs ¹⁴⁶ if necessary and the international community of consumer organizations.

ANNEX 4

UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

	CONSUMER NEED	THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD IN CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION
A	<i>Access by consumers to essential goods and services;</i>	Expressly include reference to human rights and the right to adequate food in consumer protection legislation
B	<i>The protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers;</i>	Ensure the poorest, those in situations of vulnerability, women, Indigenous Peoples, children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled, are protected
C	<i>The protection of consumers from hazards to their health and safety;</i>	Food must be safe and free from harmful contaminants, such as chemical traces and pesticides
D	<i>The promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers;</i>	Pricing should be fair to facilitate the availability and access of food, and market incentives for responsible consumption towards sustainable food systems
E	<i>Access by consumers to adequate information to enable them to make informed choices according to individual wishes and needs;</i>	There should be accurate, clear and informative food labelling, developed through consumer consultation and taking account of the needs of people in vulnerable situations (language, presentation etc.)
F	<i>Consumer education, including education on the environmental, social and economic consequences of consumer choice;</i>	People should be made aware, through education and the provision of information, of the human rights impacts of their consumer choices
G	<i>Availability of effective consumer dispute resolution and redress;</i>	Ensure accessible legal or administrative mechanisms for redress and claims in case of harm or loss
H	<i>Freedom to form consumer and other relevant groups or organizations and the opportunity of such organizations to present their views in decision-making processes that affect them;</i>	Consumer empowerment, representation and participation must be promoted and protected. The right to join organizations and make individual and collective demands must be respected
I	<i>The promotion of sustainable consumption patterns;</i>	Provide incentives for and promote sustainable food systems, recyclable and reduced packaging, and reduced loss and waste
J	<i>A level of protection for consumers using electronic commerce that is not less than that afforded in other forms of commerce;</i>	Special regulations should be adopted for digital/e-commerce, as it relates to food and food systems, to guarantee food safety, consumer protection and human rights
K	<i>The protection of consumer privacy and the global free flow of information.</i>	Digital regulations should be adopted on data protection and the right to privacy/informed use of consumer data

ANNEX 5

THE CFS-RAI PRINCIPLES (SUMMARIZED)

10 Principles	Recommendation ¹⁴⁷
1. Contribute to food security and nutrition	<p>Agricultural investment should lead to increased sustainable production and productivity of safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. It should reduce food loss and waste, incomes should be improved and poverty reduced, markets should be made more fair, transparent and efficient. The interests of small producers are paramount. Infrastructure should be improved and the resilience of food systems strengthened. Enhance access to clean water, sanitation and energy to improve the use of nutritious and safe food.</p>
2. Contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic development and the eradication of poverty	<p>This includes respecting workers' rights, implementing international labour standards and eliminating the worst forms of child labour, creating new jobs and fostering decent work, improving work conditions, adequate living wages and health and safety, training and career advancement, fostering entrepreneurship, equal access to market opportunities, rural development and social protection coverage, empowering small producers, women and men, and promoting their access to resources, improving livelihoods and sustainable consumption.</p>
3. Foster gender equality and women's empowerment	<p>Treat all peoples fairly, eliminating all measures and practices that discriminate or violate based on gender. Advance women's tenure rights and their access and control over productive land, promoting access to extension, advisory and financial services, education, training, markets and information. Enhance women's roles in leadership and participation in decision-making, partnerships and equitable sharing of benefits.</p>
4. Engage and empower youth	<p>Advance young people's access to productive land and natural resources, provide appropriate training, education and mentorship programmes, as well as access to decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities. Promote access to innovation and technology, combined with traditional knowledge.</p>
5. Respect tenure of land, fisheries and forests and access to water	<p>Investments should respect legitimate tenure rights and water uses, and be in line with the VGGT and the SSF Guidelines.¹⁴⁸</p>
6. Conserve and sustainably manage natural resources, increase resilience and reduce disaster risks	<p>Prevent, minimize and remedy negative impacts on air, land, soil, water, forests and biodiversity. Support and conserve biodiversity and genetic resources and contribute to restoring ecosystem functions and service. Recognize the vital role played by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, reduce waste and losses in production and post-harvest operations, increase the resilience of agriculture and food systems, habitats and livelihoods of small producers to the effects of climate change, reduce and remove greenhouse gas emissions and integrate traditional and scientific knowledge with best practices and technologies through different approaches.</p>
7. Respect cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and support diversity and innovation	<p>Respect cultural heritage sites and systems, including traditional knowledge, conserve and make available genetic resources including seeds and respect the rights to save, use, exchange and sell resources, recognizing the interests of breeders. Promote fair sharing of benefits arising from use of genetic resources for agriculture and food and promote the application and use of locally adapted and innovative technologies and practices research and development and transfer of technology.</p>

<p>8. Promote safe and healthy agriculture and food systems</p>	<p>Promote safety, quality and nutritional value of food and agri-products, supporting animal health and welfare and plant health to sustainably increase productivity, product quality and safety, improve the management of agricultural inputs and outputs to enhance efficiency of production and minimize threats to the environment and to public health. Enhance awareness and communication regarding evidence-based information on food quality, safety and nutrition and public health issues to strengthen capacity for agriculture and food systems. Enable consumer choice by promoting availability and access to safe, nutritious, diverse and culturally acceptable foods.</p>
<p>9. Incorporate inclusive and transparent governance structures, processes and grievance mechanisms</p>	<p>Responsible investments must respect the rule and application of law, free of corruption, be transparent and share information relevant to the investment in an inclusive equitable and accessible manner at all stages of the investment cycle. Engage with all those who may be affected by the investment decisions, prior to decisions being taken and respond to those contributions, taking into account power imbalances to achieve active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes in line with the VGGT and engage in effective and meaningful consultation with Indigenous Peoples to obtain free prior and informed consent with due regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Ensure access to transparent and effecting mediation and grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms and respect human rights and legitimate tenure rights.</p>
<p>10. Access and address impacts and promote accountability</p>	<p>Mechanisms to assess and address economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts considering small holders, gender and age and respecting human rights. Applying mechanisms for independent and transparent assessments including participation of all stakeholder groups, define baseline data and indicators for monitoring and measurement of impacts, consider and identify measures for potential negative impacts, including the decision not to proceed with the investment, regularly assess changes and communicate results, implement compensatory actions or remedial actions where negative impacts or non-compliance with national law or contractual obligations.</p>

ANNEX 6

EXTRACTS FROM THE UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS. IMPLEMENTING THE UN 'PROTECT, RESPECT AND REMEDY' FRAMEWORK, 2011

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Implementing the UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework 2011.

Inter alia:

State duty to protect human rights Foundational Principle:

- 1.** States must protect against human rights abuse within their territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties, including business enterprises. This requires taking appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish and redress such abuse through effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication.
- 2.** States should set out clearly the expectation that all business enterprises domiciled in their territory and/or jurisdiction respect human rights throughout their operations.

Access to Remedy Foundational Principle:

- 25.** As part of their duty to protect against business-related human rights abuse, States must take appropriate steps to ensure, through judicial, administrative, legislative or other appropriate means, that when such abuses occur within their territory and/or jurisdiction those affected have access to effective remedy.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Implementing the UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework 2011.

Inter alia:

Corporate responsibility to respect human rights Foundational Principle:

- 11.** Business enterprises should respect human rights. This means that they should avoid infringing on the human rights of others and should address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved.
- 13.** The responsibility to respect human rights requires that business enterprises:
 - a) Avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and address such impacts when they occur;
 - b) Seek to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to those impacts.

ANNEX 7

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – THE ZERO HUNGER GOAL

SDG2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030¹⁴⁹

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, Indigenous Peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

2.A Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

2.B Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.

2.C Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.

ANNEX 8

TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

Keep in mind the nine tips for consumers to be #ZeroHunger Heroes¹⁵⁰

FAO Consumer checklist for food waste reduction

- **Start small** – Take smaller portions at home or share large dishes at restaurants.
- **Leave nothing behind** – Keep your leftovers for another meal or use them in a different dish.
- **Buy only what you need** – Be smart with your shopping. Make a list of what you need and stick to it. Don't buy more than you can use.
- **Don't be prejudiced** – Buy "ugly" or irregularly shaped fruits and vegetables that are just as good but look a little different.
- **Check your fridge** – Store food between 1 and 5 degrees Celsius for maximum freshness and shelf-life.
- **First in, first out** – Try using produce that you had bought previously and, when you stack up your fridge and cupboards, move older products to the front and place newer ones in the back.
- **Understand dates** – "Use by" indicates a date by which the food is safe to be eaten, while "best before" means the food's quality is best prior to that date, but it is still safe for consumption after it. Another date mark that you can find on food packages is the "Sell by" date, which is helpful for stock rotation by manufacturers and retailers.
- **Compost** – Some food waste might be unavoidable, so why not set up a compost bin!
- **Donate the surplus** – Sharing is caring.

For more ideas see also FAO's 'Food Waste and becoming a Food hero – 15 quick tips' article at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1309609/>

NOTES

¹ **UN Secretary-General.** 2020. *The Highest Aspiration – A call to action for human rights*. New York, NY, USA. (also available at https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf).

² **FAO.** 2020. *Outline of the Strategic Framework 2022-31 and Outline of the Medium Term Plan 2022-25*. Document presented at the hundred and sixty-fifth session of the FAO Council, 30 November–4 December 2020. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nd976en/nd976en.pdf>), e.g. p9.

³ See details of FAO's Right to Food e-learning courses at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/e-learning>.

⁴ **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO.** 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#>).

⁵ **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO.** 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#>).

⁶ **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO.** 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#>).

⁷ **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO.** 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#>).

⁸ **FAO.** 2020. *COVID-19 global economic recession: Avoiding hunger must be at the centre of the economic stimulus*. Policy brief. Rome. 10 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8800en/ca8800en.pdf>).

⁹ See for example the Food Coalition, launched in November 2020: <http://www.fao.org/food-coalition/en/>.

¹⁰ **UNGA.** 1986. *Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986*. A/RES/41/128. (also available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f22544.html>). For more information see the Declaration on the Right to Development website at: <https://www.un.org/en/events/righttodevelopment/>.

¹¹ The term consumer organizations is used generically throughout this document to refer to consumer associations, groups or any other civil society body

that represents consumers. This report is produced in collaboration with Consumers International and its affiliate members – see the Consumers International website at: <https://www.consumersinternational.org/> The work of some of these member organizations is included in this guide.

¹² See the full text of the UN Charter at <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>; see also the UDHR 1948: **UNGA.** 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948*. 217 A (III). (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf).

¹³ See the full text of the UN Charter at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

¹⁴ For detailed information about the founder nations and timeline for growth in UN membership see: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/growth-in-un-membership>

¹⁵ As of December 2020.

¹⁶ 24 October 1945. For more information see the history of the UN website at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un>.

¹⁷ **UNGA.** 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948*. 217 A (III). (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf), Preamble.

¹⁸ **UNGA.** 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948*. 217 A (III). (also available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html>).

¹⁹ As at May 2020.

²⁰ **UNGA.** 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948*. 217 A (III). (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf).

²¹ See the Stand up for Human Rights website at: <https://standup4humanrights.org/en/>.

²² **UN Secretary-General.** 2020. *The Highest Aspiration – A call to action for human rights*. New York, NY, USA. (also available at https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf).

²³ **FAO.** 2005. *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the*

context of national food security. Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council, November 2004. Rome. 48 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-y7937e.pdf>), para. 19.

²⁴ See the UN HRBA Portal at: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>.

²⁵ **World Conference on Human Rights.** 1993. *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993*. A.CONF.157/23. Vienna. (also available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/vienna.pdf>).

²⁶ This meeting was held in San Salvador, El Salvador on 3–4 September 2017 – for news coverage see: <https://www.odecu.cl/2017/09/06/consumidores-exigen-medidas-para-enfrentar-situacion-de-sobrepeso-y-obesidad-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe/>.

²⁷ For further reading see **OHCHR/FAO.** 2010. *The Right to Adequate Food*. Fact Sheet No. 34. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/b358e/b358e.pdf>).

²⁸ **UNGA.** 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948*. 217 A (III). (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf), Article 25(1).

²⁹ For additional and complete information on related human rights instruments see: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UniversalHumanRightsInstruments.aspx>.

³⁰ ‘Ratification’ refers to the process by which a State agrees to be bound by the terms of a binding international instrument.

³¹ See the Depository of Treaties section of the UN Treaty Collection website at: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Content.aspx?path=DB/MTDSGStatus/pageIntro_en.xml.

³² **UNGA.** 1976. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 1966*. 993 UNTS 3. (also available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html>).

³³ There are currently 171 States parties to this treaty.

³⁴ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is the UN Committee of experts tasked to explain the scope of economic, social and cultural rights contained in international human rights law, established in 1985. For further information see the CESCR homepage on the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/ceschr/pages/ceschrindex.aspx>.

³⁵ The General Comment can be accessed and downloaded in full at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f1999%2f5&Lang=en.

³⁶ **CESCR.** 1999. *CESCR General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11)*. E/C.12/1999/5. Geneva,

Switzerland. (also available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c11.pdf>), paragraph 6.

³⁷ Available in the six languages of the UN via the UN Treaty Body database at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f1999%2f5&Lang=en.

³⁸ **CESCR.** 1999. *CESCR General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11)*. E/C.12/1999/5. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c11.pdf>), paragraph 8.

³⁹ These are referred to as the four pillars of food security, as conceptualized and agreed at the 1996 World Food Summit. See: **EC-FAO Food Security Programme.** 2008. *An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/al936e/al936e00.pdf>) and OHCHR Toolkit on the Right to Food at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/ESCR/Pages/Food.aspx>. For a more recent analysis which expands the four pillars of food security to expressly include the dimensions of agency and sustainability, see: **HLPE.** 2020. *Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative towards 2030*. Report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>).

⁴⁰ All ratifying, approving, accepting or acceding States. (Ratification, accession, approval or acceptance are all treaty related actions, whereby a State agrees to be bound by the terms of a particular treaty. For more information see UN Glossary at: <http://ask.un.org/faq/14594>).

⁴¹ See the homepage of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food on the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/food/pages/foodindex.aspx>.

⁴² For further examination of this see publications: **FAO.** 2009. *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*. Rome. 328 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0815e.pdf>) and **FAO.** 2019. *Fifteen years implementing the Right to Food Guidelines – Reviewing progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1238130/>).

⁴³ For more information on the Optional Protocol see: **UNGA.** 2008. *Resolution 63/117 on the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 2008*. A/RES/63/117. (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CESCR/OProtocol_en.pdf).

⁴⁴ For more information and procedure for lodging complaints see the following pages of the OHCHR website: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/TBPetitions/Pages/IndividualCommunications.aspx#ICESCR> and <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/TBPetitions/Pages/HRTBPetitions.aspx>.

⁴⁵ This can be checked via the UN Treaty Collection website at: <https://treaties.un.org> and the OHCHR Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard at: <https://indicators.ohchr.org>.

⁴⁶ See the 'Automated subscription services' link at the top of the page on the UN Treaty Collection website at: <https://treaties.un.org>.

⁴⁷ See the CESCR homepage on the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cescr/pages/cescrindex.aspx>.

⁴⁸ See the 'Special Procedures' section of the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/sp/pages/welcomepage.aspx>.

⁴⁹ See the homepage of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food on the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/food/pages/foodindex.aspx>.

⁵⁰ For more information on the Universal Periodic Review see: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprmain.aspx>.

⁵¹ For more information of civil society organizations' (CSO) engagement with human rights, see for example UN Human Rights resources for CSOs: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/CivilSociety.aspx>.

⁵² See the 'Human Rights Bodies' section of the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>.

⁵³ See the FAOLEX database website at: <http://www.fao.org/faolex/en/> and the 'The Right to Food Around the Globe' section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food-around-the-globe/en/>.

⁵⁴ For example, relevant Voluntary Guidelines have been elaborated in recent years and endorsed by the FAO member countries, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the Committee on Fisheries (COFI).

⁵⁵ **FAO**. 2005. *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*. Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council, November 2004. Rome. 48 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-y7937e.pdf>).

⁵⁶ For more details see: **FAO**. 2019. *Fifteen years implementing the Right to Food Guidelines – Reviewing progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1238130/>).

⁵⁷ For a detailed examination see **FAO**. 2009. *Guide on Legislating for the Right to Food*. Rome. 328 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0815e.pdf>).

⁵⁸ See the 'Right to Food Methodological Toolbox' section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/rtf-methodological-toolbox>.

⁵⁹ See the 'Learning resources' section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/learning-resources/en/>.

⁶⁰ **FAO**. 2005. *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of*

national food security. Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council, November 2004. Rome. 48 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-y7937e.pdf>).

⁶¹ Seen more visibly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶² For further examination see: **FAO**. 2019. *Fifteen years implementing the Right to Food Guidelines – Reviewing progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1238130/>).

⁶³ SDGs or 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015. For further details see the SDGs section of the UN website at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

⁶⁴ See UNFCCC website at: <https://unfccc.int>.

⁶⁵ **UNCTAD**. 2016. *United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection*. UNCTAD/DITC/CPLP/MISC/2016/1. New York, NY, USA and Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditccplpmisc2016d1_en.pdf).

⁶⁶ **UNGA**. 1985. *Resolution 39/248 on consumer protection, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 April 1985*. A/RES/39/248. (also available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/39/248>).

⁶⁷ **UNGA**. 2015. *Resolution 70/186 on consumer protection, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 December 2015*. A/RES/70/186. (also available at <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/186>).

⁶⁸ See: **Consumers International**. 2016. *Consumer Protection: Why it matters to you. A practical guide to the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection*. London. (also available at <https://www.consumersinternational.org/media/2049/un-consumer-protection-guidelines-english.pdf>).

⁶⁹ For further details on the IGE on Consumer Protection Law and Policy see the UNCTAD website at: <https://unctad.org/meeting/intergovernmental-group-experts-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-first-session>.

⁷⁰ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (India). (also available at <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15256/1/a2019-35.pdf>).

⁷¹ Consumer Protection Act 2019 (Zimbabwe). (also available at <https://www.dpcorp.co.zw/assets/consumer-protection-act.pdf>).

⁷² The full text of the Guiding Principles can be downloaded from the UNCTAD website at: <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/CompetitionLaw/UN-Guidelines-on-Consumer-Protection.aspx>.

⁷³ See: **Consumers International**. 2016. *Consumer Protection: Why it matters to you. A practical guide to the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection*. London. (also available at <https://www.consumersinternational.org/media/2049/un-consumer-protection-guidelines-english.pdf>).

- ⁷⁴ **CESCR**. 1999. *CESCR General Comment No. 24: on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities*. E/C.12/GC/24. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5beacba4.html>).
- ⁷⁵ See information on 'Responsible investment in agriculture and food systems' on the CFS website at: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/policy-products/rai>.
- ⁷⁶ **CFS**. 2014. *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au866e.pdf>).
- ⁷⁷ **OHCHR**. 2011. *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework*. New York, NY, USA and Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/GuidingprinciplesBusinesshr_eN.pdf).
- ⁷⁸ **UN HRC**. 2011. *Resolution 17/4 on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 16 June 2011*. A/HRC/RES/17/4. (also available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/17/4>).
- ⁷⁹ **OHCHR**. 2011. *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework*. New York, NY, USA and Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/GuidingprinciplesBusinesshr_eN.pdf).
- ⁸⁰ See the 'Business and human rights' section of the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/BusinessIndex.aspx>.
- ⁸¹ See the homepage of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food on the OHCHR website at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/food/pages/foodindex.aspx>.
- ⁸² **FAO**. 1996. Report of the World Food Summit, 13–17 November 1996. Rome. WFS 96/REP. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/w3548e/w3548e00.htm>).
- ⁸³ **CESCR**. 1999. *CESCR General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food* (Art. 11). E/C.12/1999/5. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c11.pdf>).
- ⁸⁴ See for example: **CESCR**. 2000. *CESCR General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health* (Art. 12). E/C.12/2000/4. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf>), paragraph 11.
- ⁸⁵ For a full examination of costs estimates and assessments related to diet see: **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO**. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets*. Rome. (also available at http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/online/ca9692en.html#chapter-2_2), section 2.2.
- ⁸⁶ **Boseley, S.** 2020. Obesity and coronavirus: how can a higher BMI increase your risk? *The Guardian*, 3 June 2020. (also available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/03/obesity-and-coronavirus-how-can-a-higher-bmi-increase-your-risk>).
- ⁸⁷ **FAO**. 2020. *Maintaining a healthy diet during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Policy brief. Rome. 3 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8380en/CA8380EN.pdf>).
- ⁸⁸ Some of the impact of the work of consumer organizations can be seen in sections 2 and 3 of this report.
- ⁸⁹ See the website of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 at: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>.
- ⁹⁰ The five UNFSS Action Tracks are: i.) Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All; ii.) Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns; iii.) Boost Nature Positive Production at sufficient scale; iv.) Advance Equitable Livelihoods; and v.) Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stress. For more information see the UNFSS website at: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks>.
- ⁹¹ See information on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025 at: <https://www.un.org/nutrition/>.
- ⁹² See details of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) 2014 on the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/icn2/en/>.
- ⁹³ **FAO**. 2014. *Rome Declaration on Nutrition*. Conference Outcome Document from the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), 19–21 November 2014. ICN2 2014/2. Rome. 6 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>).
- ⁹⁴ **CFS**. 2021. *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*. Rome. (also available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2021/Documents/CFS_VGs_Food_Systems_and_Nutrition_Strategy_EN.pdf).
- ⁹⁵ See information on 'Food systems and nutrition' on the CFS website at: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/workingspace/workstreams/nutrition-workstream/en/>.
- ⁹⁶ See information on 'Food systems and nutrition' on the CFS website at: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/workingspace/workstreams/nutrition-workstream/en/>.
- ⁹⁷ **WHO**. 2017. *The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes – Frequently Asked Questions (2017 Update)*. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254911/WHO-NMH-NHD-17.1-eng.pdf?ua=1>).
- ⁹⁸ **WHO**. 1981. *International Code of Marketing of Break-milk Substitutes*. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/code_english.pdf).
- ⁹⁹ See information on monitoring of the code on the IBFAN website: <https://www.ibfan.org/code-monitoring/>.

¹⁰⁰ See the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>.

¹⁰¹ **FAO & WHO**. 2018. *Understanding Codex – Fifth Edition*. Rome. 52 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1176EN/ca1176en.pdf>).

¹⁰² See the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>.

¹⁰³ See Article 1 of the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in: **FAO & WHO**. 2001. *Codex Alimentarius Commission – Procedural Manual*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/Y2200E/y2200e02.htm#bm02>).

¹⁰⁴ See the 'About Codex Alimentarius' section of the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/en/>.

¹⁰⁵ See the 'Consumers' section of the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/about-codex/consumers/en/>.

¹⁰⁶ This was established by the UN in December 2018.

¹⁰⁷ See summary in Annex 3 and FAO Voluntary Guidelines: **FAO**. 2005. *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*. Adopted by the 127th session of the FAO Council, November 2004. Rome. 48 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-y7937e.pdf>).

¹⁰⁸ **FAO & WHO**. 1999. *Understanding the Codex Alimentarius*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/w9114e/W9114e05.htm>). More information is available online at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/home/en/>.

¹⁰⁹ This is public information which is usually located on the webpage of the relevant Ministry for Agriculture/Food/Health etc.

¹¹⁰ This is also public information which is usually located on the website of the relevant Ministry.

¹¹¹ See the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>.

¹¹² See details of the Codex E-Learning course on the FAO Codex website at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/resources/elearning-course/en/>.

¹¹³ See the 'Consumer Protection Standards' section of the Consumers International website at: <https://www.consumersinternational.org/what-we-do/consumer-protection/standards/>.

¹¹⁴ See details of ISO 26000 on social responsibility on the ISO website at: <https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html>.

¹¹⁵ See details of international standards in the food production sector on the ISO website at: <https://www.iso.org/news/ref2334.html>.

¹¹⁶ See for example the 'The Right to Food' section on the FAO website: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/en/>; the 'Standards and Policies' section on the FAO website and <http://www.fao.org/in-action/standards-and-policies/en/> and the Voluntary Guidelines sub-section of the 'The Right to Food' section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/guidelines/en/>.

¹¹⁷ **UNGA**. 2015. *Resolution 70/1 on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015. A/RES/70/1*. (also available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html>).

¹¹⁸ See the UN SDGs website at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

¹¹⁹ See details of SDG2: Zero Hunger on the UN SDGs website at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>.

¹²⁰ See further information on SDG2 on the SDGs Knowledge Platform at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>.

¹²¹ See the UN SDGs website at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

¹²² See the 'Introduction to Mitigation' section of the UNFCCC website at: <https://unfccc.int/topics/mitigation/the-big-picture/introduction-to-mitigation>.

¹²³ See the 'Climate Change' section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/climate-change/en/>.

¹²⁴ To read the full text of the Agreement see: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

¹²⁵ 175 countries signed the Paris Climate Accord during COP21, 15 December 2015. As of 2020, 197 countries are parties to the Agreement, with 189 countries having ratified it. See details of the ratification status on the UNFCCC website at: <https://unfccc.int/process/the-paris-agreement/status-of-ratification>. In November 2019, the USA initiated the formal year-long withdrawal process from this Agreement.

¹²⁶ See FAO website information on 'Countering Climate change with innovation' at: <http://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1234107/>.

¹²⁷ See details of the Paris Agreement on the UNFCCC website at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>.

¹²⁸ See the sustainable consumption section of the Consumers International website at: <https://www.consumersinternational.org/what-we-do/sustainable-consumption/consumer-information-for-sustainable-consumption/>; see also the website of the One Planet Network at: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/consumer-information-scp/actors>.

¹²⁹ Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and

Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention), adopted 10 September 1998, revised in 2019 (also available at <http://www.pic.int/TheConvention/Overview/tabid/1044/language/en-US/Default.aspx>).

¹³⁰ See the Pesticide Action Network's website at: www.pan-international.org.

¹³¹ For further details of FAO's approach to food systems see: <http://www.fao.org/food-systems/our-approach/en/>.

¹³² For a contemporary examination of sustainable food systems and nutrition see CFS Guidelines on Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition: *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ne982en/ne982en.pdf>).

¹³³ **HLPE**. 2014. *Food Losses and Waste in the context of Sustainable Food Systems*. Report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3901e.pdf>).

¹³⁴ See Food loss and waste sub-section of the Climate Change section of the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/climate-change/our-work/areas-of-work/food-loss-and-waste/en/>.

¹³⁵ For further information see FAO website page on food loss and waste at: <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-agriculture/2019/en/>.

¹³⁶ See details of FAO Food Loss and Waste Index at <http://www.fao.org/food-loss-and-food-waste/en/>; see also: **FAO**. 2018. *Food Loss and Waste and the Right to Adequate Food – Making the Connection*. Right to Food Discussion Paper. Rome. 48 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca1397en/CA1397EN.pdf>).

¹³⁷ **HLPE**. 2017. *Nutrition and food systems*. Report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. (also available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-12_EN.pdf), p23.

¹³⁸ **HLPE**. 2017. *Nutrition and food systems*. Report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. (also available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-12_EN.pdf), p23.

¹³⁹ See reference document: **FAO, UNCTAD, UNIDO, World Bank, IFAD & UNEP**. 2015. *All Food Systems are Sustainable*. Final Report of the Zero Hunger Challenge Working Groups. New York, NY, USA. (also available at <https://www.un.org/es/issues/food/taskforce/pdf/All%20food%20systems%20are%20sustainable.pdf>).

¹⁴⁰ For a more detailed examination see: **Consumers International**. 2019. *How Consumer Organisations Can Contribute to Sustainable Food Systems*. London. (also available at <https://www.consumersinternational.org/media/314552/how-consumer-organisations-can-contribute-to-more-sustainable-food-systems.pdf>).

¹⁴¹ See FAO website article on '9 tips for reducing food waste and becoming a #ZeroHunger hero' at: <http://www.fao.org/zhc/detail-events/en/c/889172/>.

¹⁴² See the website of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/food-systems-summit-2021/>.

¹⁴³ The UN Food Systems Summit of 2021 is an opportunity for effective engagement by consumer organizations.

¹⁴⁴ **ICRC**. 1949. *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), adopted 12 August 1949, entered into force 21 October 1950*. 75 UNTS 287. (also available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html>).

¹⁴⁵ These ideas are intended to suggest different ways consumer organizations can help, but are heavily dependent on country context, capacity and relevance, and so are not designed as a one-stop shop for all. In all cases, the use of information must always respect rules of confidentiality and informed consent in relation to consumers.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, UN Human Rights resources for civil society organizations (CSOs): <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/CivilSociety.aspx>.

¹⁴⁷ The summary recommendations contained within this table are further explained and detailed in: **CFS**. 2014. *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/au866e.pdf>).

¹⁴⁸ VGGT refers to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. For further details see: <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/mechanisms/mechanisms-details/en/c/448858/>. SSF Guidelines refers to the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. For further details see: <http://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en/>.

¹⁴⁹ See details of Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>.

¹⁵⁰ See FAO website article on '9 tips for reducing food waste and becoming a #ZeroHunger hero' at: <http://www.fao.org/zhc/detail-events/en/c/889172/>.

CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Consumers are a powerful force for change towards a sustainably developing world that leaves no one behind and respects the human rights of all. This publication presents the linkages between the work of consumer organizations and the realization of the right to adequate food at local, national, regional and global level. It highlights the importance of these organizations to food security, healthy diets and food systems transformations. The report can support consumer organizations in their awareness raising and capacity development efforts towards even greater impact. It is also intended to reinforce their place as vital partners at the policy and decision-making table.

It is designed as a complement to *Consumer Organizations in Action*, which showcases the experiences of consumer organizations regarding food issues, facilitates networking, partnerships, and the exchange of knowledge, skills, strategies and good practice.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) wishes to thank the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) for its financial support, which made this report possible.