



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

Wednesday 16 October 2019, World Food Day

Healthy diets for #ZeroHunger is the theme of the World Food Day that we celebrate today. Eradicating hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture are one of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. But how far have we got with achieving these goals?

Despite numerous actions and considerable efforts to eradicate hunger over the years, we still fall short of obtaining the objectives of Agenda 2030. More than 820 million people in the world are hungry today. Even more people suffer from being overweight and from obesity: over 670 million adults and 120 million children and young people (aged 5-19) are obese, over 40 million children are overweight.¹

Ironically, one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year gets wasted, with Europe leading the list of continents on food waste.² With growing hunger on the one hand and immense food waste on the other, one cannot fail to notice the systemic problem with the global redistribution of resources such as food. Moreover, individual decisions have very little to do with a healthy diet. Firstly, healthy and locally produced food is not affordable for many. Secondly, advertising and profit-oriented lobbying of companies in the food policy sector have much bigger consequences on choice, accessibility and affordability of the food we eat.

Furthermore, the overproduction of meat and dairy products not only has ethical implications that the Council of Europe European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes³ addresses, it also has increasingly high negative consequences on the environment and accelerates climate change.

Consequently, as the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states, climate change will further intensify the pressure on food production, affect food availability, increase deforestation, hinder access to adequate food and disrupt the livelihoods of communities – especially of the most vulnerable – and bring us further away from a sustainable and resilient future for people and the planet.⁴

The future of food production and the accessibility of these resources are questions of human rights as well as democracy. This issue will not be solved until the core of the problem has been addressed. There is a need for democratic institutions and structures that enable young people and minorities to participate in shaping decisions that directly concern them. At the same time, youth need to have agency in these decision-making bodies to prevent powerful, profit-led companies from dictating our food policies.

Food security and sustainable food production are issues of high concern for young people. The need for global solidarity, a fair redistribution of resources and a power shift is evident. We should never underestimate the power of the young generation to change the rules!

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.

¹ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO); [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019](#)

² Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO); <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/087>.

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its special report on [Climate Change and Land](#)