

# ZERO HUNGER

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# 1. INTRODUCTION – WHY ZERO HUNGER?

The vision of the Swedish Green Party is sustainable, democratic societies that live and work within the limits set by nature, locally as well as globally. These societies would live together in peaceful co-existence and cooperation on equal terms. Our politics rests on a threefold solidarity:

- solidarity with animals, nature and the ecosystem
- solidarity with future generations
- solidarity with all the peoples of the world<sup>1</sup>

If we want to live in real solidarity with all the peoples of the world, we cannot, as is the case today, allow the fact that a large part of humanity is starving.

A new expression: “zero hunger” has for the first time ever been intro-

duced in our party programme: We want to, at the international level, to set a global target for zero hunger. No human being should have to starve.

The reason for the launch of this new expression is that until now, there has been no a positive word in Swedish to describe what we want to achieve: a world without hunger. In Brazil, President Lula is making the fight against hunger a priority, with the campaign Fome Zero. In Italy, the corresponding expression is Fome Zero, and at the European Social Forum in Rome in the 2003 Zero Hunger was used. We have chosen to use the word “nollsvält” (zero hunger), which is now also in the party programme of the Swedish Green Party. Zero Hunger!

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Green Party, party programme, adopted in 2005.

## 2. WORLD HUNGER

During the last 35 years, the proportion of starving people in the world has decreased from 34 per cent to 17 per cent. It could therefore be claimed that hunger has been halved. But since the world's population has doubled during the same time period, it means that the actual number of starving people has been more or less the same. More than half of those who are starving are children.

During the very last years, the number of people who are starving has even increased. In 2004, FAO<sup>2</sup> reported that the number of starving people in 2001 had increased by 18 million people compared to the number 5 years earlier, in 1996, the same year the target was set to halve the number. Instead of decreasing, the number had risen to 852 million people.<sup>3</sup>

Far more people die from starvation and poverty than from war and terror

attacks. Approximately 7 million children under the age of 5 die every year from chronic malnutrition caused by the lack of food and from diarrhoea caused by lack of access to clean water. This means one child every five seconds.

Malnourishment sets in when someone neither can get enough nutrition to cover the daily need of energy and protein, nor the need of vitamins and minerals. Children are particularly prone to malnourishment. Malnourishment can be either acute or chronic. Chronic malnourishment means a constant or recurring lack of food. Acute malnourishment is caused by war and disasters and today accounts for approximately 10 per cent of all deaths by starvation. 90 per cent of all deaths by starvation are a consequence of malnourishment and take place during everyday circumstances.

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<sup>2</sup> FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, was founded in 1945 with the task to ensure good nutrition for all. FAO is located in Rome and has 140 member countries.

<sup>3</sup> FAO 2004. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004*.

Malnourished mothers give birth to malnourished children. Many mothers with small children are so poor that they cannot afford to buy food or obtain access to arable land.

Of course there are a large number of different reasons, indirect as well as direct, behind starvation. The problems of starvation are furthermore very complex. Many other reasons interact and both strengthen and are strengthened by starvation and malnourishment, and in the worst case, vicious circles are created. For example, the immune defence of a person who is malnourished will be deteriorated and that person will therefore be harder struck by aids – which in turn can cause malnourishment since it will be harder for that person, perhaps without access to antiretroviral drugs, to support him- or herself. A person who is malnourished cannot fully profit by an education – and those who are educated starve to a lesser extent. Those living on the brink of starvation are forced to overexploit natural resources, deteriorating the opportunities to future support. Of basic importance are the world's malfunctioning structures. This applies in particular to the unfair trade rules that today first and foremost favour the rich countries.

The strongest connection is the one between poverty and malnourishment. Most people are aware of the

fundamental importance of poverty on malnourishment. Food can be found in abundance on a market, but poor people still cannot afford to pay for it. But there is also a connection in the opposite direction: hunger and malnourishment are a cause of poverty.

People's strength and capacity deteriorate, directly and physically, and since health and the mental ability are affected, and people's ability to change their situation or work together with others for better conditions, are weakened. A hunger trap is created where malnourishment is inherited in generations.

Eradicating hunger is, beyond the obvious human gains, profitable from a purely economic point of view. The cost of eradicating the lack of calories and proteins create a sevenfold increase in income for society, according to figures by FAO and others. To remedy a lack of iron and iodine gives a return of 10 – 20 times. Eradicating starvation is profitable for society.<sup>4</sup>

Hunger costs billions of dollars annually in productivity losses. The French researcher Jean-Louis Arcand has shown that the economic growth in countries south of Sahara would increase by 1-2 per cent annually, which means that if people obtained 2 770 calories per day, the GNP will double in 35 years.<sup>5</sup>

With a full stomach it is possible for people to use their mental abilities

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<sup>4</sup> FAO 2004. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004*.

<sup>5</sup> Arcand, Jean-Louis 2001. *Undernourishment and economic growth. The efficiency cost of hunger*. In *FAO Economic and social development paper 147*.

and to build a future. Starvation does not only affect those lacking food, it affects humanity as a whole. Someone who is hungry could more readily become desperate and resort to violence. For example, women with no other possibilities to support themself-

ves could be forced into prostitution, and unemployed young men are more easily recruited as mercenary soldiers. We cannot create a peaceful world as long as extreme hunger and poverty are allowed to persist.

### 3. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The UN and its different sub organs have for several decades, at a number of different summits, decided to halve and even eradicate hunger and starvation.

Already at the *World Food Conference* in 1974, the UN member states decided to eradicate hunger. At that time, the belief was that it would take ten years. The proposal was made to establish a World Food Council, a kind of Security Council for food provision. That proposal was never implemented. In 1996, the *World Food Summit* was arranged. At the summit, the member states of FAO committed themselves to halve the number of people starving on earth: from 800 million people to 400 million people. That means that 400 million people would still be starving.

The commitment from the *World Food Summit* was repeated at the *UN Millennium Summit* in September 2000. At this meeting, the Millennium Declaration<sup>6</sup> and a number of Millennium Development Goals<sup>7</sup> were adopted, the first and overarching of which is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. One of the targets to this first goal is to halve the proportion of people starving between 1990 and 2015. This means an even lower aim than before, since the number halves by itself when the population doubles. But probably – not even this target will be achieved.<sup>8</sup>

Economic globalization has made it obvious for a lot of people that the gains from it are distributed particularly unequally and that the gaps between the haves and the have-nots are increasing dramatically. In 2001,

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<sup>6</sup> *The UN Millennium Declaration*, adopted at the Millennium Summit 6-8 September 2000.

<sup>7</sup> The other Millennium Goals include education, equality, decrease infant mortality and improved maternal health, fight against HIV/aids, malaria and other diseases, environmental sustainability and measures the rich world needs to take. This agenda expresses a comprehensive view on development.

<sup>8</sup> FAO 2004. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004*.

the global justice movement started to assemble for annual meetings – World Social Forum – in Porto Alegre in Brazil. People all over the world gather in large amounts – in 2003 for example, 140.000 people participated to discuss globalisation and poverty. The criticism towards the prevailing injustices is strong. And a few of the world's leaders start to do something about it. In the United Nations in 2004, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the French president Jacques Chirac launched a campaign to finance the fight against world hunger. The goal is to collect 50 billion dollars per year, among other things through global taxes on CO<sup>2</sup>, arms trade, aviation, credit card purchases and currency transactions.

In connection with the opening of the UN General Assembly in September 2004, Lula and Chirac also arranged a conference where they stated that "Hunger is the cruellest weapon of mass destruction. Hunger continues to kill 24 thousand people a day." An action plan – Action Against Hunger and Poverty – was adopted. In the final declaration of the conference, signed by some hundred nations, it is stated: "The greatest scandal is not that hunger exists, but that it persists even when we have the means to eliminate it."

Thus, there is an international commitment to eradicate hunger and there is also a plan for how to achieve this.

In the beginning of 2005, the UN Millennium Project presented the report *Investing in Development – A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. In this report, ten recommendations to achieve the goals are presented, ranging from increased foreign aid to specific strategies to fight poverty.<sup>9</sup> As basic data for this plan, a number of reports were put forward. One of these reports (UN Millennium Project 2005 Halving Hunger: It Can Be Done) specifically addresses the issue on how to halve hunger in the world.

The Swedish Green Party welcomes both these reports. The report *Halving Hunger: It Can Be Done* has a broad and global approach on how to halve hunger. A number of measures are suggested, with recommendations for what should be done on the global as well as the national level. On the global level, it is underlined that the international community – in particular the rich countries – needs to move from word to action and honour their commitment concerning increased development assistance, debt relief and a phase-out of the trade subsidies.<sup>10</sup>

The opinion among committed people is growing and organisations are being formed. In the beginning of 2005, the international campaign Global Call to Action Against Poverty was launched. Across the world the symbolic sign is spreading: A white ribbon around the wrist. The campaign is

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9 UN Millennium Project 2005. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*.

10 UN Millennium Project 2005. *Halving Hunger: It Can Be Done*.

pursuing issues such as increased and improved development assistance, fair trade rules and debt relief.

In July 2005, the leaders of the richest countries – the so called G8 group – met in Scotland.<sup>11</sup> The meeting was preceded by large demonstrations and concerts, where the G8 group was requested to move from word to action.

The G8 meeting took one step forward through a decision about a kind of debt relief for the poorest countries. The financing will however mainly be

carried by the poor countries themselves through reduced foreign aid.

In September 2005 the UN arranged a summit, among other things to speed up the work with the Millennium Development Goals and to abolish poverty in the world. Unfortunately, hardly any steps forward were taken, despite the fact that the eradication of poverty is not only the overriding goal among the Millennium Development Goals, but is also the key to reach the other goals.

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<sup>11</sup> The G 8 countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, RUssia, Great Britain and the USA.

## 4. WHAT IS THE SWEDISH GREEN PARTY'S THOUGHT?

It is deeply upsetting and completely unacceptable that so many people are starving. The Swedish Green Party has the political will to work for a world free from hunger. That is why we make the demand for zero hunger a priority.

We believe that a double strategy is required to eradicate hunger. On the one hand, hunger needs to be attacked directly, to increase the productivity and the ability of those affected; on the other hand, long-term agricultural and rural development must be stimulated to secure the development in the long run.

Furthermore, we believe that starvation cannot be regarded as an isolated phenomenon, which is, among other things, why the Swedish Green Party wholeheartedly supports the work with the Millennium Development Goals. A comprehensive view

is needed, that puts the problem with malnourishment in a broad perspective, with solutions at many different levels, from the personal level to the global.

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is of course a difficult task, but not impossible one. There is actually, according to the FAO, enough food on the planet to feed everyone. The supply of food has never been greater. If the global world production was to be distributed equally between everyone on earth, it would amount to 2,760 calories per person and day. Of course the need varies between different individuals, but an adult needs roughly 2,200 calories per day.

Thus, there really should not be anything missing to let everyone starving have enough food, still it does. What is lacking is simply political will.

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15 De Vylder, Stefan 2002. *Utvecklingens drivkrafter*.

Although some things have been done, it is apparently far from enough. The life style we in the Western world have, and our pursuit for economic growth, is in addition contributing to starvation and poverty in the world.

Today's international trade rules, that exploit poor people and impoverish their agriculture, must be repla-

ced by fair trade. Goods with the fair trade label guarantee reasonable pay for the products, protect the environment and give poor workers power over their production.

In the following we put forward some proposals that we think that Sweden should put forward in the work to reach zero hunger.

## 5. FOOD IS A HUMAN RIGHT

“Human rights” is a concept that is often used in a careless manner and one therefore needs to be cautious when claiming that something is a human right. Within the UN system, human rights are legally binding for the states that have signed them, and the rights regulate the relationship between the individual and the state. The state has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of its citizens.

Food is a human right. This right is regulated in several of the great conventions on human rights, for example the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (the ICESCR).

The fact that food is a human right does not mean that the state should distribute food to fulfil its obligations, but that the state has an obligation to

make sure that its citizens can support themselves.

For example, in some cases small farmers’ right to land must be protected, or they can be provided with other sources of income. But food is also a good. From a trading perspective, goods are sold on a market and in theory purchasing power and demand steer supply. Failing purchasing power means the market will not work as an efficient distributor of goods to those who need them, that is, those who are hungry. In order for the human right to food to be respected, measures must be taken to address poor people’s lack of purchasing power. In Sweden, there is for example a social security system that includes economic assistance.

Despite the fact that food is a human right, a lot of people are starving and it is not possible for them to make a complaint within the UN system, as it is when political and civic rights are

being violated. This is due to the fact that there is no follow-up mechanism, a so called optional protocol, to the ICESCR. It is the only one of the six large conventions on human rights lacking an optional protocol. The reasons behind this can, among other things, be found in the old east-west conflict, where the two blocs had different approaches: In the Western bloc the view was that the political rights were the most important ones, while the Eastern bloc made economic rights a priority.

The lack of an optional protocol has probably contributed to the fact that poor people turn to foreign aid donors instead of demanding reforms and a more just distribution from their own governments. But foreign assistance can never replace reforms carried out by a government. Increased knowledge on the part of poor people about their human rights and the responsibilities of governments would provide them with a good tool in the daily struggle against hunger and injustice.

ECOSOC, the UN Economic and Social Council, publishes comments to define the economic and social rights. In 1999, the so called General comment 12 on the right to adequate food<sup>12</sup> was published. Many organizations, among others the FAO, that earlier worked from a more technical and production oriented perspective,

have now started to work from a rights perspective.

It is easier for citizens in a democracy to hold their government responsible in a democracy. The research carried out by the Indian economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has shown that there is a clear connection between political and economic rights. One of Sen's conclusions is that starvation disasters do not occur in democratic states. Those in power in a democracy are simply more dependent on their citizens' approval.<sup>13</sup>

The Swedish government confirms in its policy on human rights that these are indivisible and that all rights are important and mutually concurrent.

Sweden's new policy for global development, adopted by the Swedish parliament in the end of 2003, stresses two central points of departure for the policy towards developing countries: The rights perspective and the perspective of the poor.

Taking human rights as a point of departure means working with basic principles about the inherent dignity and equal value of all people, the responsibilities and obligations of the state and people's right to take an active part. Working against poverty and hunger would not be an act of charity, but a way to strengthen people's self-evident right to support themselves.

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12 UN CESCR 1999. *The right to adequate food, General comment 12.*

13 Sen, Amartya 1981. *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation.*

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should, in an active and constructive manner, in all international forums, work for an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, to make it possible for individuals to appeal against abuses of the right to water and food.

## 6. WATER AS A HUMAN RIGHT

We stand before a global crisis where one billion people, one sixth of earth's population, lacks access to clean water.<sup>14</sup> Marginalised and vulnerable groups are lacking water. The reasons for this are for example discrimination, rising prices, pollution from large-scale agriculture and industry, and insufficient sanitation.

International law acknowledges water not only as a human need, but also as a basic human right, according to the same conventions that cover the right to food. With a human rights perspective, it is also possible to get to the root of the matter. There is enough water on earth to cover everybody's need. But poor people often get to pay more for their water than the middle classes, sometimes thirty times as much.

Water is also a good that is sold on a market and private big enterprises,

mainly European, often enter the water sector to distribute and clean water on a commercial basis. Through GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services of the WTO), the European Union has made tough demands on developing countries to open up their water distribution for EU companies that are able to drive domestic service out of business. Although the GATS agreement does not formally force a country to deregulate and privatize, its mere existence puts pressure on single countries to open up their service sector. The effects of such liberalisations in the developing countries have in many cases been disastrous.<sup>15</sup>

In 2003, the global water market was dominated by two French giants, Vivendi and Suez, who among them controlled 70 per cent of the world's market for water services.<sup>16</sup> But all

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<sup>14</sup> WHO and UNICEF 2000 *Report. Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment.*

<sup>15</sup> Polaris Institute 2003. *Global Water Grab.*

<sup>16</sup> The term "water services" refers to the production and distribution of drinking water and the cleansing of sewage.

over the world, new popular movements arise to defend water as a public good.

Not only drinking water is a controversial issue. Of all the fresh water being used, almost 70 per cent is used within agriculture, which shows the enormous significance of water for food production.

Industry uses 23 per cent and households 8 per cent.<sup>17</sup> The fight over water is stepping up. The demands from industry and households for more water decrease the amount of water used within agriculture.

Lack of water is rather invisible for us in Sweden, who are completely "water blind" to use an expression coined by Malin Falkenmark, former UN expert on water issues. But the problem has become more and more obvious. One of the most visible proofs is that many large rivers no longer reach the ocean since a lot of the water is being used for artificial irrigation. This applies for example to the Colorado River in the USA and the Yellow River (Huang He) in China. The Nile, Indus and Ganges are also severely affected.

There is a very strong connection between water and food. Humans need to consume on average 4 litres of drinking water per day. But a lot more water is being used to produce our food, at least 2,000 litres per day. And that applies to vegetarians. For

those who eat meat, twice as much, some 4,000 litres per day, is needed if the meat comes from animals bred on cereals.<sup>18</sup>

Countries that are hit by a lack of water tend to first and foremost satisfy the need of the cities and the industry, cut back on water for agriculture and import cereals instead. It is simply the most economic thing to do. To produce one ton of cereals takes 1,000 tons of water, so the most economic way to import water is to import cereal and other agricultural products. That is for example what China is doing, a country where 4/5 of arable land used to be irrigated, which is not possible in the long run.

In the fight over water, agriculture loses out to industry for other reasons as well. Since as much water is being used to produce a ton of cereals as to produce industrial products worth 70 times as much, it is perhaps not so strange that downright economic concerns and the creation of work places are made a priority.<sup>19</sup> The result is that China's import of food is increasing and the prices are rising all over the world.

The lack of water is also great in Southern Africa, where unfortunately efforts are being made to export agricultural products to the North. This is hardly suitable. There is not enough rainfall and evaporation is too great. The water is not even sufficient for

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17 UNESCO 2003. UN World Water Development Report.

18 Brown, Lester r. 2003. Plan B, Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble.

19 Brown, Lester r. 2003. Plan B, Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble.

agriculture to support the local population with staple foods, and the economic abilities to import food are food.

Small farmers have often had to rely on rainfed agriculture. Malin Falkemark has pointed at some solutions to help small farmers harvest rainwater and use it in the most efficient way. But she also draws the gloomy conclusion that some areas are perhaps too dry to manage to feed a growing population.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should work to make clear that access to clean water is an explicit human right.
- Sweden should, at the international level, get involved in the fight against the privatisation of water services.
- Swedish foreign aid should to a larger extent be focused on satisfying women's access to clean water.

## 7. EQUALITY

Listen to the women! The World Bank has conducted deep interviews with 60,000 poor people and the answers are presented in the report *Voices of the Poor*, published in 2000. Responding to the question on the worst thing about poverty, men said that it is the lack of power. The women answered: Not having food for the children.<sup>20</sup>

The report points at incomprehensible differences in living conditions between poor people and rich people over the world; with some people not being able to give their children anything else but a cup of water before sending them to bed. The report also shows how difficult it has been for governments and the international community to reach the poor – and how few attempts that have been made to find out how the poor themselves define their poverty and their needs.

A gender analysis of the report points for example at the lack of gender segregated statistics regarding how poverty is expressed as far as hunger is concerned – since hunger is harder on women in the many cultures where women are the last ones to eat.

Women all over the world belong to the poorest since they – also compared to poor men – often lack income, resources in the form of land, capital and education, and since they, because of their sex, often are excluded from decision-making assemblies, also at the local level. At the same time, experience shows that women make other priorities than men and that if mothers have access to resources, the entire family will benefit from it. One example is Grameen bank<sup>21</sup> that works with micro credits and that has been particularly successful in Bangladesh.

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<sup>20</sup> The World Bank 2000. *Voices of the poor*.

<sup>21</sup> More information can be found at [www.grameen-info.org](http://www.grameen-info.org)

Some other interesting observations that can serve as a base for finding more efficient measures to fight poverty and hunger are that, for example, households led by women have better welfare and quality of life than households led by men, even when those led by women have lower income. Female networks are often strong, but the majority of women lack knowledge about their formal rights and need education and knowledge about these. A large problem for many women is that they are regarded as dependent on men and denied their own ID that could entitle them to food rations, health care etc.

When the surrounding world, for example through assistance and loans from the World Bank, has tried to help poor people, things have often gone wrong. The goal and demands of the World Bank have often been completely gender blind. Often, requests to change the country's policy in a neo-liberal direction have been made, aiming for better macroeconomic figures for the country, without addressing the effects as far as income distribution are concerned. One of their goals is for GNP to increase and the public sector to decrease. Almost always, requirements are made for export-oriented agricultural production.

When the growth rate increases, starvation among children often increase. When investments in export crops are made, women, who constitute 70 per cent of the world's farmers are often pushed aside and thereby

the food production for the family's needs disappears as well. The proceeds from exports hardly ever go to women and seldom to poor men. Instead, transnational companies profit from them, companies that are not first and foremost interested in contributing to the poor country's development, but to make money. All legal obstacles for women as landowners and borrowers are a significantly larger problem for starving women and children than macro-economic relationships. Women seldom benefit from their own great work efforts and investments.

300 million women all over the world run small enterprises. Less than two per cent of these have access to credits from formal sources of credit. All the trees that are now being planted by women in Kenya are not owned by them but by the person – a man – with the land certificate. Women must simply be equally entitled to own and inherit land!

Conventional economic theory is overwhelmingly gender-blind, even at the household level. The exchange patterns within the family generally reflect the relationships of power between spouses, which generally means inferior conditions for women.

A lot of poor women and children still walk for hours every day to collect water and wood. 40 billion work hours every year are spent only to fetch and carry home drinking water in Africa.

Out of the total number of work hours carried out by women, paid labour

only constitutes one fourth. Basic infrastructure for water and energy must therefore be designed according to the needs and preconditions of women and children, as least as much as according to the needs and preconditions of men.

Food on the table is a precondition for democratic development. New and creative solutions are needed to provide women with cash. A possibility that is being discussed is the introduction of a "global child allowance" financed by a tax on currency transactions (see next chapter).

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should, at the international level, work for an economic transfer of resources for improved social safety nets.
- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased support to micro loans and other forms of credits to women.
- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased support to women's legal rights to own land, capital and to hold IDs.
- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased support to education for girls and women about their human rights.

## 8. THE LACK OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES AT THE MACRO LEVEL

Some 50 billions annually are missing to finance the Millennium Development Goals. A large summit, *Financing for Development*, was held in Monterrey in Mexico in 2002 to find solutions to the problems concerning the financing of the Goals, but the result was poor.

In the action plan, *Action Against Hunger and Poverty*, several new opportunities are mentioned, among others a tax on aviation fuel, arms trade and currency transactions.

A tax on currency transactions is necessary to finance the eight Millennium Development Goals that the UN member states have lined up behind.

There are two aims behind the currency tax: Partly to stabilize the currency market, partly to collect resources in order to finance development. The most current proposals stem from a two-tier tax, a tax on two levels.<sup>22</sup> The originator of the idea is the German professor Paul Bernhard Spahn.

Under normal circumstances, a small tax rate is levied, in the magnitude of 0,005 per cent. The level is set so low that it will cost less to pay the fee than to try to avoid it. In order for the tax to be effective, only five of the world's large financial centres must join. Consequently, the USA does not need to join – and it is also possible to start on a smaller scale. New estimates show that the tax, despite being so small, would generate approximately 10-15 billion dollar – money that would constitute a significant contribution to financing the Millennium Development Goals.

The costs for the first level are comparable to the “security transaction taxes”, that are common already today.

Another important aspect with Spahn's proposal is that it will be possible to levy taxes in a fairer manner. Since it is today difficult to levy capital

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22 SIPRI 2005, *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*.

taxes, the world's governments have been forced to tax labour far too much. A tax shift from work to capital is necessary in order to provide the global community with sufficient income to finance a global welfare system.

Being able to stabilise the currency is extremely important for a country's development. Therefore, great resources are today being invested in countries' currency reserves, as a security against currency speculations.

But that is indeed a very unprofitable "investment". If the countries instead were to be used in real investments, they would yield a significantly higher return – and benefit. India has, for example, more than 100 billion dollars in currency reserves, mainly in American government securities, that only yield 1-2 per cent annually. A tax on currency transactions is therefore needed. Partly to finance development, partly as a stabilising factor for countries to escape currency attacks and not having to hold large currency reserves. But is it feasible?

Yes. All countries are not as negative as Sweden has been so far. In July 2004, the Indian finance minister proposed a so called Security Transaction Tax on the Indian financial markets. More or less at the same time, the Belgian parliament adopted a proposal to introduce a currency transaction tax, built on Spahn's proposal for a tax on two levels. Already in January 2003, France approved an amendment to its national budget making it possible to introduce a tax or fee on currency transactions, provided that the EU legislation will be changed.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- A fee on currency transactions should be introduced, and Sweden should work to make this happen in a coordinated fashion within the EU.
- Sweden should take a positive attitude towards testing the alternative finance mechanisms that have been identified, to finance the Millennium Development Goals.

## 9. ARMS TRADE

The world's total military expenditures in 2004 amounted to more than 1,000 billion dollars.<sup>23</sup> In comparison, total development assistance amounted to barely 50 billion dollars. Not only rich countries spend a lot of money on their defence. According to FAO, countries with food shortages spend two to three times as much money on defence as on agriculture, and the small investments being made in agriculture are decreasing even further.

Sweden's new policy for global development states that the policy towards the surrounding world should be concentrated on fighting poverty and that the policy should be coherent. Our policy on one area must not work counter to what we want to achieve in other areas. There are however several goal conflicts. One of the most serious ones is our policy on arms trade.

In 2005, the Swedish arms trade amounted to more than 8.6 billion SEK.

It was the fourth consecutive increase. Today, poverty reduction, according to the international obligations Sweden has entered into, is not "weighed" into decisions to export war materials. It is considered every regime's sovereign right to buy unlimited amounts of war materials, regardless of poverty. But if the country is so rich that it can spend enormous amounts on war materials, the question why we at the same time give development assistance becomes relevant. Sweden is increasing its share on the international arms export market, which is a disturbing development. International arms trade should instead be limited. Sweden should therefore work to decrease both the production and export of war materials.

In addition, Swedish activities to promote export should be abolished. Instead of contributing to the global arms trade, Sweden should work

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<sup>23</sup> The so called Singapore issues include investment protection, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation.

towards sustainable and democratic development.

Sweden should not export arms, especially not to countries where people are starving. The export of the fighter aircraft JAS, for example to South Africa, is particularly unacceptable.

Other countries with a hunger problem, for example Brazil, are often pressured to buy material. This is in contradiction to the credibility and efficiency of the poverty reduction that we have promised to support in the global cooperation work.

Of course, it is not only the purchase of war materials that stifle development. The suffering caused by armed conflicts also includes an increased risk of starvation crises. In addition, starvation is a cause of conflict per se.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should phase out its export of arms.
- Sweden should immediately stop the arms trade to countries with a starving population.

## 10. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The concept *food sovereignty*<sup>24</sup> means the right of a people, poor single countries and regional unions to define their own agricultural and food policy.

To secure access to food, local agriculture needs to be made a priority and first and foremost be directed to feed the local population. Farmers and landless people must have sufficient access to land, water, seed and credits. To achieve this, land reform, fight against large-scale agribusiness and GMO crops, and access to good and cheap seed are required, without the obstacle of for example biased patent rights. Furthermore, water should be regarded as a common good and be managed and distributed under democratic control in a way that is long-term sustainable.

Farmers and farm workers should have the right and opportunity to produce food on a small-scale basis, and consumers should have the right

to decide what to eat and how and by whom this should be produced. Furthermore, countries must have the right to protect themselves from the import of agricultural and food produce with too low prices, that is against dumping. The price set on imported agricultural produce must be directly connected to the cost of producing it and not create unfair competition that drive local producers out of business.

Also included in the concept of food sovereignty is for local people to take part in the decisions made about agricultural policy. The rights of women farmers rights should be stressed, not least for their decisive role for agricultural and food production. Each country needs its own policy space to be able to make the decisions needed for the population to have access to food and opportunities to support themselves.

In other words, the national government should not be circumscribed by

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<sup>24</sup> Teh phrase is coined by the international peasant movement Via Campesina ([www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org))

demands for macroeconomic reforms that can be made by trade conditions, creditors and aid donors. This can apply to right to use protective duties as well as the opportunity to store cereals for future provision or, when needed, protect domestic production.

The requirements made today by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank on the countries that want to borrow money mean that the countries should first and foremost make an effort to increase exports, that is, to grow cash crops like for example coffee, cotton and cocoa. But countries lose their sovereign right of self-determination and their policy space if they direct their agricultural production towards export crops, since they will not be able to decide the prices on the world market. At the same time, they make them-

selves dependent of food imports to high consumer prices over which they have no control either. Many developing countries even obtain less for their export crops than what they pay for the necessary food imports. The result is that they supply the Western world with increasingly exotic food for which we pay less and less, while starvation persists in their own countries. Food sovereignty for a poor country is thus of vital importance to reach the goal of zero hunger.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should, at the international level, work for food sovereignty as goal for agricultural policy and trade policy, in the EU as well as in the rest of the world.

## 11. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

As stated earlier, there is enough food to provide every human being on earth with food on the table. But in certain regions, first and foremost in Sub-Saharan Africa, access to food is a problem per se, and the sustainability in conventional cultivation systems has not been satisfactory, neither economically, socially nor ecologically. These cultivation systems have turned out to be particularly unsuitable for small farmers in areas with low productivity.

The fact is that approximately 75 per cent of the poor live in the countryside. Despite estimates that a majority of the world's population will be living in cities in 2020, 60 per cent of the poor will still be living in the countryside. Focusing on rural development is therefore of utmost importance to reduce poverty. Poor people leave their homes in the countryside to move into cities, only to experience a different kind of poverty. A reduction of poverty in the countryside does not increase poverty in the

cities, but the other way around. FAO shows that programs for rural development promote cities as well as the countryside, as opposed to poverty reduction in cities, which only promotes urban development.

It is however not enough to establish that there is enough food for everybody's needs today. Agriculture must be sustainable, to guarantee the supply of food in the long run. Organic farming could contribute to economic development with its minor effect on the environment, the natural resources and on people's health, with environmentally driven business development, a decrease of the use of fossil fuels, the maintenance of biological diversity and a decrease of poor people's exposure to dangerous chemicals.

Organic farming often has great similarities with cultivation systems that have sprung from the experience of generations: use of local resources with little use of purchased input goods. Organic fertilizers are used,

which has a positive effect on the soil structure and water management. The cultivation is based on nitrogen-fixing plants, which diminishes the costs for artificial fertilizers. It also decreases the chemical strain on the environment by ecologically harmful substances, and biological diversity can be maintained. It also improves the working environment for those who work within agriculture and decreases the costs for health care. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the number of deaths caused by chemical biocides in agriculture is between 20,000 and 200,000 annually.

Finally, organic farming also includes energy crops that could replace fossil, expensive fuels for the benefit of both the economy at the local level and the global climate. The international market for organic products is gradually growing. Ecological, small-scale farming creates unexploited opportunities with an added value on the market that develops the countryside and reduces poverty. Exporting organically produced food could be a way for countries in the Third World to access to new markets in the North.

Thus, a new, truly green revolution is needed, that in comparison to the former one will focus on sustainability and local adaptation. The previous green revolution was far too focused on industrial modes of production with monocultures, large-scale irrigation systems and genetically modified crops without any long term

consideration for the environment. The change must also include the landless and the small farmers, and make diversified agriculture, starting from local preconditions for agriculture, traditions and the social context and, not least, local needs, a priority. Top-down solutions from the outside mostly do not take local knowledge and commitment into account, but satisfy, at best, an imaginary consumer benefit on a foreign market. Increased local democracy and popular participation in development processes are therefore a precondition. Focus must be on the poorest people, including women farmers.

Increased direct investments are required in agriculture, among other things in research, infrastructure and education, in order to increase the supply of food and improve distribution. Another kind of investment that plays an important part is investments in, among other things, improved nutrition. This is a very cost efficient way to fight starvation. As far as investments are concerned, micro loans – small sums at a low interest rate – could also play a significantly large role for local development and also be an efficient way to channel foreign aid. Being small-scale, micro finances also significantly decrease the risk of corruption. In this connection, school meals programs could be well worth mentioning. School meals programs with local food provide significant synergy effects and are recommended in the UN report on how to achieve the

Millennium Development Goals as a simple solution with quick wins on the road to reduced poverty. More children will go to school and be able to benefit from the education. At the same time, local agriculture will be stimulated.

Climate change also poses a threat to agriculture. As a consequence of climate change, with among other things draught and changed rain patterns, agricultural productivity in Africa and Latin America run the risk of falling by 30 per cent during this century. The effects of climate change will be worst in poor countries. The fight against climate change also means a fight for food provision, and increased cultivation of energy crops is required, both to diversify the farmers' sources of income and to fight the climate change.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased support to micro loans and other credits specifically aimed at women for investments in local agricultural programs and rural development.
- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased support to organic farming and sustainable cultivation of energy crops.
- Sweden should, at the international level, work for increased participation by local popular movements in Swedish development assistance to make use of their creativity, knowledge and innovation ability.
- Sweden should, at the international level, increase the work to address the lack of minerals and vitamins.
- Sweden should, at the international level, increase the work to support school meals programs with locally produced food.

## 12. THE TRADE AND AGRICULTURAL POLICIES OF THE RICH COUNTRIES

The concept “food sovereignty” also includes the right to protect oneself against dumping and, when needed, protect one’s own markets. The export subsidies of the rich countries are no doubt a great problem and need to be abolished. For poor countries, it is not possible to introduce the corresponding subsidies to protect themselves, and they therefore need to make use of all the means at hand. Apart from this, rich countries must abolish their custom duties on processed products – the countries in the South today export raw materials to a large extent, that then are being refined in the North. Besides, the system of preferences for the poorest countries must be improved and strengthened for these to benefit from international trade.

In WTO’s ongoing Doha round, the ambition of which is claimed to create a fair and sustainable world trade order, the Agreement on Agriculture is of central importance, as are the rules for Special and Different Treatment, that is, more favourable terms for the poorest countries. These efforts are however undermined by the so called European Partnership Agreements the EU is negotiating with countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. These agreements originally had development ambitions, but are now being utilised to bring in the so called Singapore issues through the back door.<sup>25</sup> Stable and fair world trade rules, with particular concern taken to the need of poor countries to build their economies during an initial stage, are a must if poverty reduction and the eradication of hunger is to come true.

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<sup>25</sup> The so called Singapore issues include investment protection, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation.

The Swedish Green Party suggests:

- Efficient poverty reduction and the eradication of hunger should be the starting point for new stable and fair trade rules of the WTO system.
- Abolish export subsidies to agriculture within the EU.
- Sweden should work for the right to food to be guaranteed in all relevant international agreements.

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## LINKS

FIAN, Food First Information and Action Network	<a href="http://www.fian.org">www.fian.org</a>
Focus on the global south	<a href="http://www.focusweb.org">www.focusweb.org</a>
The Hunger Project	<a href="http://www.thp.org">www.thp.org</a>
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy IATP	<a href="http://www.iatp.org">www.iatp.org</a>
International Food Policy Research Institute	<a href="http://www.ifpri.org">www.ifpri.org</a>
Via campesina	<a href="http://www.viacampesina.org">www.viacampesina.org</a>
United Nations	<a href="http://www.un.org">www.un.org</a>
FAO	<a href="http://www.fao.org">www.fao.org</a>
The Swedish Green Party	<a href="http://www.mp.se">www.mp.se</a>
Global Call To Action Against Poverty	<a href="http://www.whiteband.org">www.whiteband.org</a>
Stamp Out Poverty	<a href="http://www.stampoutpoverty.org">www.stampoutpoverty.org</a>









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