**Supporting the right to dignified and sustainable access to food for all**

I – Context

The findings are overwhelming:

* Inequality across the world continues to grow.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Four years have passed since the World Economic Forum identified growing economic inequalities as the main threat to social stability, and three years since the World Bank added the sharing of prosperity to its goal of eradicating poverty. Since then, and despite global leaders speaking out in favour of a global aim to reduce inequalities, the divide between the rich and the rest of the population has grown further.

* The right to food, a human right recognised by international law, is not assured.

The United Nations defines the right to adequate food as follows: “It is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement”.
One in nine people globally suffers from hunger. Food insecurity is difficult to evaluate and quantify. In France, some studies estimate that the number of adults suffering from food insecurity stands at 12%.

II – The responses given are not appropriate

* In Europe, the number of poor people continues to grow and the 2020 strategy is a failure.

On the 17th of June 2010 the Member States adopted the ‘Europe 2020’ or EU 2020 strategy, which is aimed at coordinating economic policies within the European Union across a period of ten years. It seeks to reconcile the improvement of sustainable development indicators in terms of growth, jobs, and environmental protection, while improving Europe’s competitiveness at global level.

Based around investments into research and innovation, green growth, and also education and employment, the EU 2020 strategy identifies quantitative objectives at European Union level and intends to create a new form of ‘economic governance’ in order to better steer the realisation of these objectives.

The European platform against poverty and social exclusion is one of the Europe 2020 strategy’s flagship initiatives for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. It aims to help European Union Member States achieve the main objective of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion, a group representing 130 million people across the whole of the EU.[[2]](#footnote-2)
Amongst the markers of poverty, access to quality food is particularly important. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) was designed to respond by way of food aid. But does it guarantee dignified and sustainable access to quality food?

* FEAD overview

The Fund was created with aim of supporting social cohesion, strengthening social inclusion and, in the long term, contributing to the objective of eradicating poverty within the Union. It should contribute to achieving the specific objective of lessening the most serious forms of poverty by providing non-financial assistance to the most deprived people by way of food aid and/or basic material assistance as well as social inclusion activities aiming at social integration for the most deprived. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Fund is planned each year.

In France, food aid concerned over 4.8 million people in 2014 while it concerned only 2.8 million in 2008. In 2011, more than 50% of these people were present in the food aid system for more than 2 years, a percentage which has been constantly rising since 2004. The health of food aid beneficiaries is worsening (obesity, high blood pressure, etc.). This situation is becoming structural and risks becoming a long-term feature of the country’s socio-economic landscape.

The State’s actions via associations and regional and local authorities are focused upon food aid supported by the European fund (FEAD) and are largely distributive. This is almost the only avenue available to disadvantaged people seeking access to food, which they sometimes refuse because it doesn’t meet their expectations (quality and origin of products, freedom of choice, stigmatised distribution areas, etc.).

This support is nonetheless essential for the populations concerned. The associations and their volunteers are strongly mobilised and have the best intentions. We are faced with assistance-based solidarity which has become institutionalised and offers few prospects for people.

III – The current diagnosis and some European perspectives.

People feel undignified in turning to purely distributive food aid.[[3]](#footnote-3) For this type of operation, products are mostly imposed upon people without the freedom to choose. These people are often placed in a role of beneficiary without any recognised skills. The nurturing role of parents is called into question by this operation, which is focused upon logistics and standards to be upheld rather than on the people. It can be observed that some volunteers view the beneficiaries of this aid in a negative light.

Food emergencies must be addressed. On the other hand, short term situations too often become structural situations without any prospects for the people affected, who find themselves caught in a poverty trap.

On the agricultural production side, the dominant model creates poverty and inequalities, both in France and worldwide. A large number of farmers are sliding into poverty.[[4]](#footnote-4) This model must be fundamentally revised and free-trade treaties revisited.

We do not believe the current situation to be inescapable. Initiatives exist which afford a more prominent place for people suffering from food insecurity. They promote dignified and sustainable access by bringing together all of the actors from across the food chain. These regional and local initiatives[[5]](#footnote-5) are only given little support by the State, without a dedicated budget, and they cannot be developed across all areas. They are developing in a wide variety of fields where the people concerned are stakeholders in operations which also encourage employment and support local producers, the vitality of the area and the creation of social links.

*Establish a network of actors from the food system in France and Europe for the respect of the right to a dignified and sustainable food supply.*

By ‘food system’ we mean the manner in which people organise themselves to produce, distribute and consume their food.[[6]](#footnote-6) Alongside several actors from production all the way to consumption, we wish to highlight, through evaluations and capitalisations, the operations which respond to the food instability of our fellow citizens in a dignified and sustainable manner.

We would like to propose that in 2020, the funds of the FEAD and the CNES be redirected towards these more dignified and sustainable operations. EAPN Europe can be the network to coordinate and steer this campaign during the three years of 2017-2020.

Establishing a network of stakeholder actors for this initiative is a first step. Work will be focused upon the identification and capitalisation of innovative operations, as well as on the views and experiences of actors from across the food system. Work on institutional relations is to be carried out throughout this campaign. Involvement from citizens is to be planned during this process. Finally, the identification of actors ready to implement these operations with the new funds mobilised is to be formalised.

The European dimension allows us to examine our practices while having exchanges between European Union Member States about the way in which we implement the FEAD and which initiatives are being launched in our countries.

This should ultimately result in a framework law on the dignified and sustainable right to food.

1. OXFAM Report, January 2017. “Since 2015, the richest 1% possesses as much wealth as the rest of the planet.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The definition of poverty maintained by Eurostat does not just include the income level but also takes living conditions (or the level of material deprivation) and the household employment level into consideration: according to the Arope indicator (at risk of poverty or exclusion), a person is considered as poor and socially excluded when the household of which they are a part has a level of available income less than 60% of the national median income, they are suffering material deprivation and experiencing difficulty finding a job.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [*http://agriculture.gouv.fr/telecharger/71709?token=8fb7e768a877834611579a7fe822eb37*](http://agriculture.gouv.fr/telecharger/71709?token=8fb7e768a877834611579a7fe822eb37)[*https://www.atd-quartmonde.fr/produit/se-nourrir-lorsquon-est-pauvre-analyse-et-ressenti-de-personnes-en-situation-de-precarite/*](https://www.atd-quartmonde.fr/produit/se-nourrir-lorsquon-est-pauvre-analyse-et-ressenti-de-personnes-en-situation-de-precarite/) *(Link in French)* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In 2014, 18% of French farmers had an income of less than €350 per month. In 2015 this figure was 30%. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.avise.org/ressources/systemes-alimentaires-territorialises-en-france> (Link in French) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *L. Malassis: Naissance et développement d’une nouvelle discipline économique : l’économie agro-alimentaire (The creation and development of a new economic discipline : the agri-food economy) University of Parma, 1998* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)