

Topic 1: Biodiversity including Agriculture and Food Security

Title: EU-LAC Cooperation: Challenges, opportunities and projections in food security

Why is this area relevant and which societal challenges does it address?

Food security is a priority issue on the current international agenda. Based on the report "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023"¹, the number of hungry people in the world increased to 828 million in 2021, to cover 9.8% of the world's population. The November 2023 Global Food Security Forum in London highlighted that "(...) Climate change, conflict and population growth pose increasing challenges to food supply.". According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) almost 30% of the world's population (2,356.9 million people) live in food insecure conditions and the United Nations projects that going forward almost 670 million people (8% of the world's population) will still be hungry in 2030².

This call focuses on strengthening cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to address the challenges of food security. What are the main triggers of the global food crisis and recent trends of food insecurity? The main triggers are persistent international conflicts, climate change, biodiversity loss, post-pandemic COVID-19 effects, economic and political crises, high cost of food, energy and fertilizers, factors that lead to growing inequalities and asymmetries in access to food³. This context, as indicated in the Declaration of the Leaders' Summit on World Food Security 2022, has disrupted production and supply chains and has drastically increased global food insecurity, particularly for the most vulnerable⁴, being a fundamental social challenge. This call focuses on this challenge framed in contributing to a dynamic and agile cooperation bridge between the EU and LAC.

LAC is a major global food supplier, exporting 40% of its food production and accounting for 17% of total world food exports. But several countries in the region are also importers. In addition, inequality in access to food, the effects of climate change, rural poverty, loss of agricultural biodiversity and food inflation persist, among other challenges to food security in LAC. In the European Union (EU), food supply is not at risk, but the European agricultural industry depends on imports of essential products such as fertilizers, and in an increasingly challenging and uncertain context such as the war in Ukraine. The key objective of this call is to contribute to strengthening cooperation in food security between the EU and LAC

Added value gained from EU-LAC cooperation for both regions

The EU-CELAC Summit Declaration of July 2023 recognized food security as one of the challenges that has been aggravated by the effects of the war in Ukraine and proposed improving cooperation and

¹ FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA y UNICEF. (2023). *Versión resumida de El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2023. Urbanización, transformación de los sistemas agroalimentarios y dietas saludables a lo largo del continuo rural-urbano*. Roma. En: <http://doi.org/10.4060/cc6550es>

² FAO. (2022). "Informe de las Naciones Unidas: las cifras del hambre en el mundo aumentaron hasta alcanzar los 828 millones de personas en 2021". 6 de julio. En: <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/un-report-global-hunger-SOFI-2022-FAO/es>

³ Aróstica, P. (2022). (Guest Ed.) "Asymmetries of the world food crisis", In: *World food crisis: effects and projections in Latin America*. Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica. Vol. 22, N°4. Mexico. pp. 7-10.

⁴ U.S. Department of State. (2022). "Declaración de la Cumbre de Líderes sobre Seguridad Alimentaria Mundial". 20 de septiembre. En: <https://www.state.gov/translations/spanish/declaracion-de-la-cumbre-de-lideres-sobre-seguridad-alimentaria-mundial/>

coordination in multilateral forums. Cooperation between the EU and LAC has made significant progress: it has promoted the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices; agricultural research and technology has been strengthened; and inclusive rural development has been supported. It has also contributed to improving food availability, food quality and the resilience of rural communities in LAC⁵.

This call focuses on strengthening and giving greater dynamism to the cooperation and promotion of joint strategies between the EU and LAC to address the complexities of food security challenges.

Some initiatives that can help add value to bi-regional dialogue and cooperation are⁶:

- **Cooperation in research and development:** Promote collaboration in joint research and development projects between universities and research centres in both regions to stimulate research on topics such as: sustainable food production methods, innovative agricultural technologies, among others.
- **Establish platforms for dialogue:** Create formal and informal platforms where different actors from the EU and LAC can address food security challenges through meetings and exchanges that foster collaboration between governments at different levels together with actors from the private sector and civil society in search of solutions.
- **Sharing knowledge and experiences:** Promote exchange programs, technical visits and internships so that food safety experts from the EU and LAC can learn together and implement multilevel training for different actors in the food production chain.
- **Support local initiatives:** Strengthen local initiatives that address specific food security issues and replicate successful programs such as "AI-Invest 5.0".
- **Develop joint policies:** Promote joint food security policies between the EU and LAC to enhance the increase of sustainable food production, fertilizer production and other measures.
- **Encourage investment in advanced agricultural technology:** Investing in digitization and modern agricultural technology in LAC to have more efficient irrigation systems or better post-harvest management to reduce food loss and support increased production to meet the growing demand of the population in a sustainable way, brings benefits for both regions.
- **Encourage sustainable trade:** Create an enabling environment for fair trade by promoting the transition to sustainable agriculture, access to a variety of nutritious foods, and include the challenge of food security in future trade agreements between the EU and LAC.

Expected impact for both regions

In the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit Declaration, mention was made of the relevance of joint cooperation "(...) to address the many crises and multiple challenges of our time, such as food insecurity, poverty, inequalities in both regions, disruptions in supply chains and rising inflation." (Council of the European Union, 2023). This call aims to promote cooperation between the EU and LAC essential to address food security challenges and promote sustainable development.

Through this call, several specific impacts are pursued through the development of research activities with the participation of experts and policy makers, focused on:

- Contribute to rethinking more resilient and efficient food systems as a priority for the EU-LAC cooperation bridge.
- Develop mechanisms that promote resilience to effectively address future food crises and their

⁵ Comisión Europea. (2021). *Programa EUROCLIMA+*. En: <https://www.euroclimaplus.org/>

⁶ Aróstica, P. & Ayuso, A. (2023) "Food Security: How to promote dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean?". EU-LAC Foundation. 29/11.
<https://eulacfoundation.org/es/seguridad-alimentaria-como-fomentar-el-dialogo-y-la-cooperacion-entre-la-union-europea-y-america>

impact in both regions, stimulating agile and action-oriented cooperation.

- Promote the analysis of future perspectives of bi-regional cooperation in the field of food security. Considering: the transition towards more sustainable food systems, agricultural digitalization and the promotion of fair and sustainable trade as opportunities for the development of stronger bi-regional cooperation.

Additional information: strategic, tactical and operational topics

A key international challenge for the present and future is to ensure that agri-food systems transform and become more resilient, in order to achieve the goal of providing food at a lower cost, affordable for all and in a sustainable manner. This challenge is also related to the need to reduce inequality gaps and asymmetries, and to this end this call aims to contribute to strengthening cooperation systems between the EU and LAC to address the challenges of food security.

While there are relevant achievements and benefits through EU-LAC bi-regional cooperation on food security, there are also challenges that can be addressed to strengthen it further. Below are some strategic issues and possible projections that are considered in this call⁷:

- Climate change and environmental disasters are a continuous and pressing challenge to food security, therefore adaptation to climate change must be a priority in EU-LAC cooperation to ensure long-term sustainable food security.
- Pandemics and health crises such as COVID-19 highlight the importance of resilience of food systems. EU-LAC cooperation can strengthen response capacity and support a steady food supply in emergency situations with resilience mechanisms to effectively cope with future food crises.
- Inequality and equitable access to food, a persistent problem in LAC. And cooperation with the EU can focus on promoting policies and programs that ensure more equitable access to nutritious food, to reduce the inequality gap in access to food and improve the situation of the most vulnerable groups.
- Conflicts such as the war in Ukraine have a significant impact on food security with an asymmetric repercussion on fluctuations in food prices and supply chains in a highly interconnected global food market. Cooperation between the EU and LAC to address these scenarios is therefore essential.
- Transition to sustainable food systems is another key challenge. EU-LAC cooperation can make progress in promoting organic farming, sustainable management of natural resources and reducing food wastage. An approach is needed that promotes sustainable agricultural practices and more environmentally friendly production and distribution systems.
- Digitalization and agricultural technology offer opportunities to improve productivity and efficiency in the agricultural sector. Bi-regional cooperation can encourage the adoption of digital technologies, such as precision agriculture and food traceability.

In summary, this call focuses on contributing to strengthening cooperation on food security between the EU and LAC. It faces continuing challenges, but also offers opportunities to jointly address these problems and develop innovative solutions. Cooperation and adaptation to changing circumstances will be key to achieving sustainable food security that generates benefits for both regions.

⁷ Idem.