

FOREWORD

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This publication addresses the longstanding but always highly topical issue of food security from different perspectives. A distinctive feature of the work is its approach, which looks at relations between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It affords a means of assessment and a framework of cooperation, one which is neither improvised nor new, as it is based on the bi-regional strategic partnership, a shared goal since 1999, the year the first summit was held between the two blocs.

Because it provides a means of livelihood, food security is an essential part of human security. As United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/290 notes, “human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people”. Thus, efforts to safeguard livelihoods through government policies and the collaboration of the private sector and civil society acquire even greater significance when the problem of food security is a global problem, aggravated by climate change, and which therefore requires cooperation and a multilateral approach.

The EU has given special priority to food security since its inception, initially approaching the issue from the point of view of guaranteeing supply (although it also provides for regulation from a public health and consumer protection perspective – see Articles 168 and 169 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU). From the Treaty of Rome (1957) establishing the European Economic Community to the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), it has stated that one of the objectives of the common agricultural policy shall be “ensuring the availability of supplies” (Article 39, paragraph 1(d), TFEU). The currency of this goal, which forms part of the Treaty of Rome and has lasted to this day, may come as a surprise. No doubt it originally sprang from the food shortage situation in Europe after the Second World War, but it has remained even in times of abundance and surplus of agricultural products in Europe. And while the common agricultural policy has been changed and adapted to the times and new situations, it has always taken account of food security. One might think it is a genuinely European

concern, and yet that is not the case. The Farm to Fork Strategy 2020 (COM 2020, 381 final) not only emphasises ensuring food security, but also takes a geopolitical and global approach, stating: “The EU will support the global transition to sustainable agri-food systems, in line with the objectives of this strategy and the SDGs. Through its external policies, including international cooperation and trade policy, the EU will pursue the development of green alliances on sustainable food systems with all its partners in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora”.

And this is the approach the EU can bring, through alliances with its partners and in the multilateral sphere. While the proposal is heavily influenced by the consequences of the pandemic, sustainability, the preservation of the environment and food quality, the stark dilemma now is this: can there be effective cooperation when there is fierce competition for food owing to conflicts and production shortfalls because of drought?

The invasion of Ukraine and Russia’s naval blockade had an impact in the first year of hostilities because Moscow used food as a weapon to limit Ukraine’s grain exports and to forge alliances, with dramatic effects in the shape of food shortages in the countries most in need and price increases. The restrictions on Russia’s fertiliser exports have also reduced production capacity worldwide.

In the face of shortage, unilateral solutions prevail. States aim to ensure the food security of their populations and place restrictions on exports. India, the world’s second biggest rice producer with 40% of the global market, has banned exports of some rice, stoking fears of inflation and food shortage. It is worth noting that rice is the staple food of over 3 billion people in the world. But it is not just India; Indonesia banned palm oil exports; Argentina blocked exports of beef; and Turkey and Kyrgyzstan forbid overseas sales of various cereals.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023* says that between 691 and 783 million people in the world faced hunger in 2022, 122 million more than in 2019, before the Covid pandemic. While progress was made towards reducing hunger in Asia and Latin America, it was still on the rise in western Asia, the Caribbean and all the subregions of Africa.

The situations described by way of example are not scenarios. They are fact. They are realities that require a solution. They are not the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: war, famine, pestilence and death. And if they are, the solution lies with the rider of the white horse of cooperation, the one representing conquest. The goal of this publication is to analyse the challenges and identify the opportunities facing EU-LAC relations.

In part one, the authors examine the new post-pandemic context for the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean; in part two, they study the main food security challenges, opportunities and projections with regard to EU-LAC relations. On the European side, we have already mentioned its long experience of prioritising the security of agricultural supplies; and Ukraine, which in all likelihood will become a member of

the EU, can be part of the solution rather than the problem. Mercosur, for its part, remains a major global food producer and is meeting the strong demand from China.

It has been the EU's goal since 1999 to create and promote a strategic bi-regional partnership between the European bloc and Latin America and the Caribbean. The narrative has always been that the two regions are natural allies bound by strong historical, cultural and economic ties which cooperate closely on the international stage and engage in intense political dialogue at all levels: regional, subregional and, increasingly, bilaterally. This cooperation, which in terms of trade and on a bilateral level has worked relatively well (free trade deals with Mexico, Chile, the Andean Community, Central America, CARICOM), has been marred by estrangement for various reasons, despite the EU's sometimes inconsistent efforts to maintain bi-regional relations. China, with its increase in trade and investments in Latin America, has been one of the reasons for estrangement on the LAC side. Another is that the EU has failed to forge stronger ties. Brexit distracted the EU for a long time and the invasion of Ukraine has changed the geopolitical landscape. It is a crucial and opportune moment to consolidate these ties, extrapolating to these relations and food security what Robert Schuman identified for Europe in his declaration of May 9th, 1950: "through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity".

This publication is to be presented at an international conference in Barcelona in November 2023. Its overall goals are: to contribute to strengthening bi-regional ties and improving mutual understanding between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean; to promote dialogue and cooperation on food security between them; and to study the food security challenges, opportunities and projections with regard to their relations. Its specific goals are: to examine the implications of the new post-pandemic scenario for the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean; make a comparative analysis of the food security challenges and asymmetries; investigate the impact of Chinese demand on food security in Latin America and the Caribbean; examine food security from a geopolitical perspective and the opportunities for relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean; analyse food (in)security and Mercosur responses in a context of greater global demand; and determine food security projections and possible scenarios for bi-regional relations. They are ambitious goals, and we believe they can be reached.

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