

The Food Security Standard: it fills a gap but has some traps

Tina Beuchelt¹, Rafaël Schneider², Liliana Gamba³

¹ Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany

² Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V., Germany

³ WWF, Germany

The problem:

- Food-insecure regions provide more and more biomass for global markets while producers' and workers' Right to Food is not fulfilled.
- Sustainability standards address risks and problems in international agricultural value chains.
- Despite certifying agricultural goods that are produced in food insecure countries, most standards do not particularly address food security.



The solution under test:

The “Food Security Standard” (FSS)

- ...takes up the Human Right to Adequate Food as a new element for sustainability standards and certification schemes.
- ...includes a set of criteria and indicators that can be integrated into any sustainability standard.

This research...

... aims to identify means to easily measure food security at local level and to assess the national food security context.

...analyses the applicability of the FSS, its legitimacy and reliability of results.

For this...

... five pilot case studies with different crops were conducted on plantations and in smallholder settings in Asia, Latin-America and Africa.

...over 25 key persons were interviewed, more than 80 farmers and workers, and six multi-stakeholder workshops were held in the pilot countries and Germany.



Sugar cane plantation worker, Bolivia



Smallholder coffee producer, Kenya



Smallholder oil palm producer, Malaysia

The results show that the FSS ...

- ... fills successfully the food security gap present in sustainability standards.
- ... can be integrated into a normal audit of a sustainability standard for all biomass feedstocks and business types.
- ... is able to reliably capture the food security situation of workers, farmers and communities and identifies gaps regarding the Right to Food.
- ... is considered as legitimate given the rights-based approach.
- ... is applicable: plantations and non-poor smallholders are able to comply with the FSS, though the latter might need some external support.
- ... certifies the status of “Being Food Secure”, hence does not work for food insecure farmers as they cannot fulfill all criteria (see Figure 1).

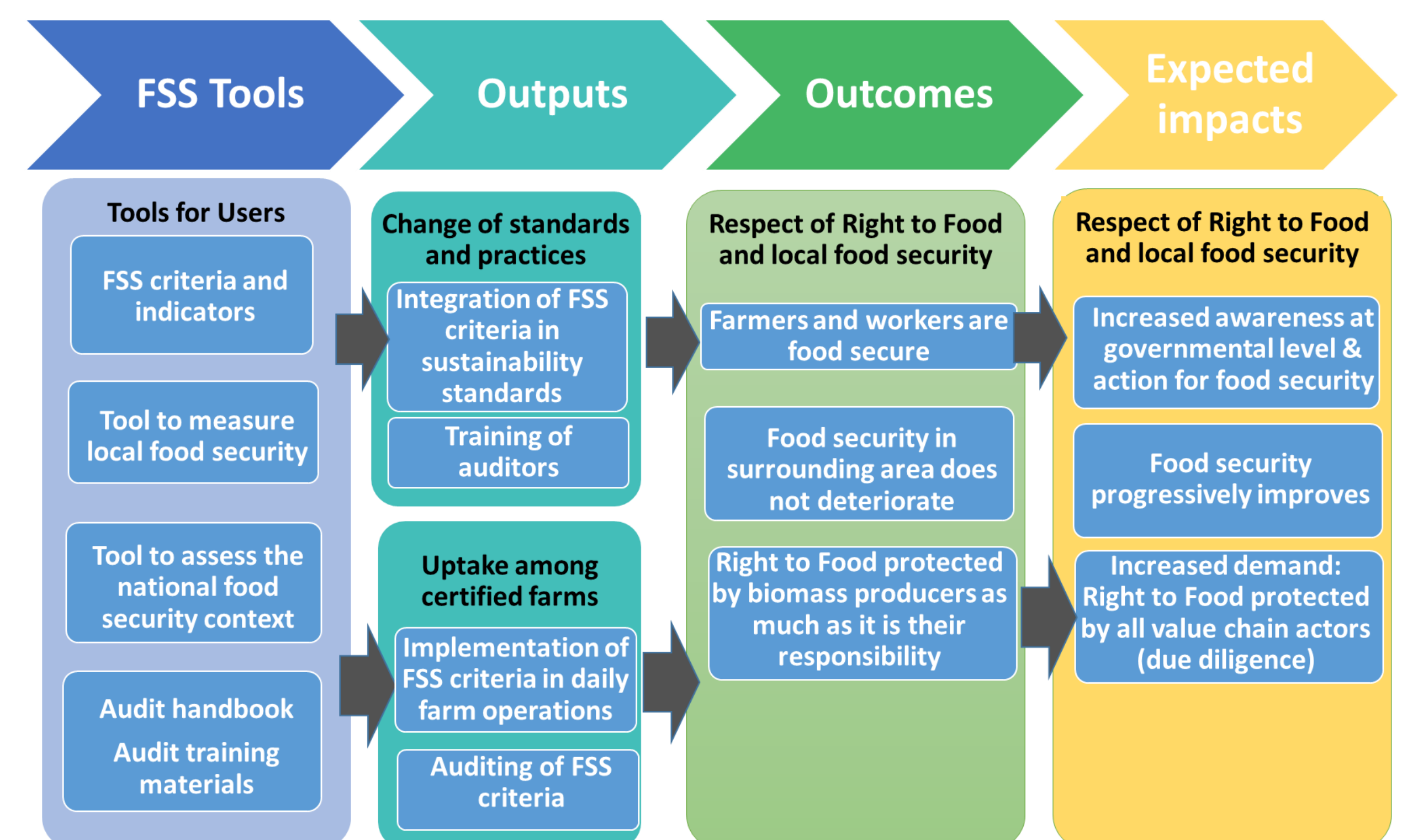


Figure 1: Impact pathway of the FSS

...but food-insecure smallholders are trapped...

...they hardly benefit from certification in terms of food security given structural problems such as low crop prices / yields, climate change, lack of land, mechanization, infrastructure or governmental support.

...as structural problems are outside the scope of voluntary sustainability standards and the private sector, alternatives are needed for highly food insecure areas (Figure 2).

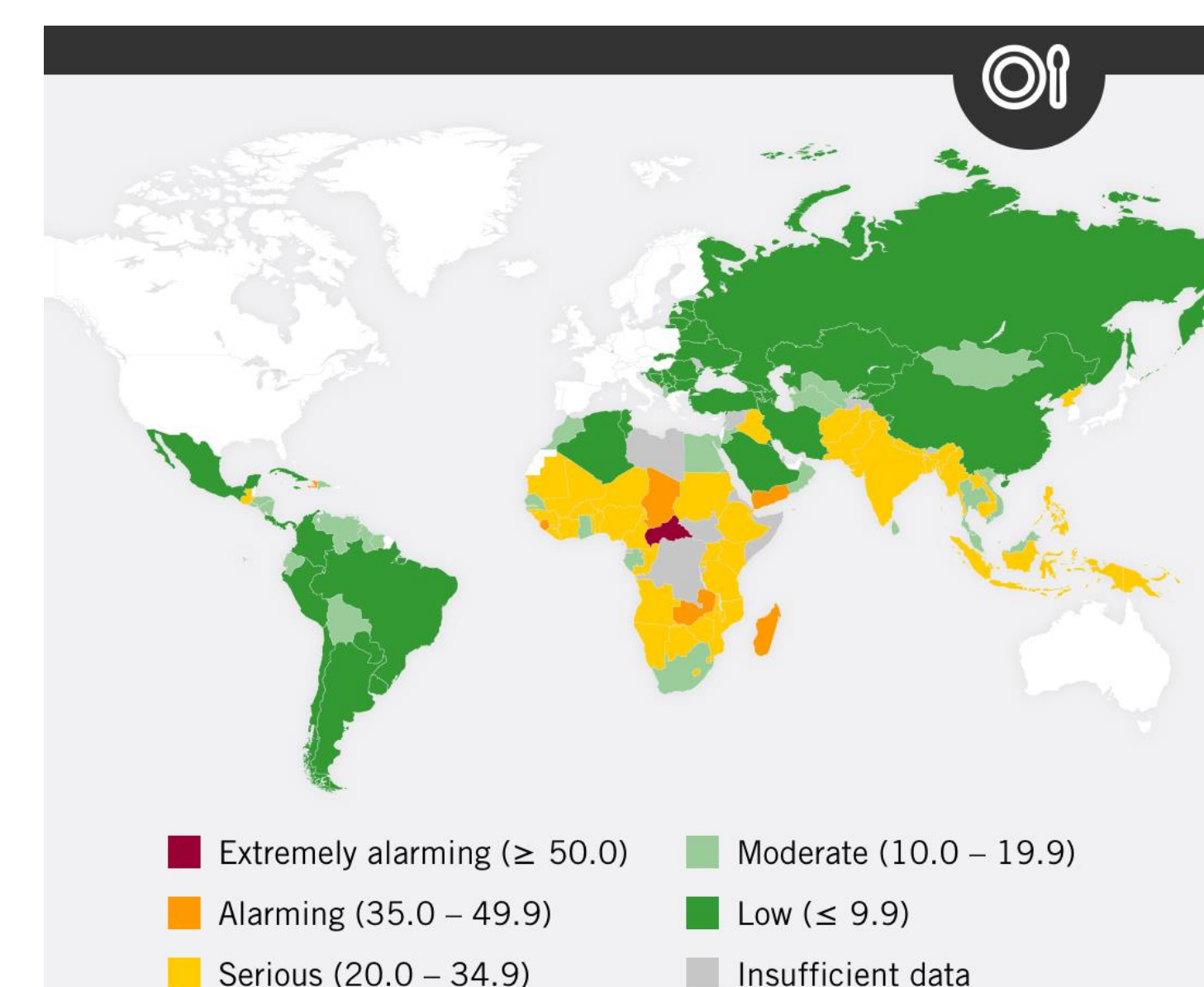


Figure 2: Global Hunger Index showing countries with high food insecurity (2018)

Conclusions:

- FSS creates awareness for food security problems of workers and smallholders and can induce transformative change in value chains.
- Plantations, smallholder organizations and traders indicated willingness to implement the FSS but require a market demand and price premiums.