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**UNITED NATIONS YOUTH AND STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRIA**

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## Abstract

**Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)**

**“Genetic Engineering for Nutrition  
to Reduce the Hunger in the World?”**

## **Introduction to the Committee**

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is since its founding in 1945 the worldwide leading institution in defeating hunger. Helping both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. The main four activity areas are: Putting information within research, sharing policy expertise, providing and meeting place for nations and bringing knowledge into the field. The FAO assists developing countries as well as countries in transition to modernize and progress agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and tries to ensure good nutrition of all. Moreover the FAO focuses especially on rural areas, which are home to 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry people.

The FAO, as a specialized UN agency, is accountable to the FAO Conference of member governments and participates in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The agency consists of eight departments: Administration and Finance, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Economic and Social Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Forestry, Knowledge and Communication, Natural Resource Management and Technical Cooperation. Beside the headquarters in Rome the FAO holds several regional, sub-regional and liaison offices all over the world.

## **Introduction to the Topic**

FAO estimates that 925 million people are undernourished worldwide (2010). Though the number has declined lately it still remains very high. FAO measures hunger as the number of people who do not consume the minimum daily energy requirement, which is the amount of calories needed for light activity and a minimum acceptable weight for attained height. The majority of the hungry live in developing countries and account for 16 percent of the population, which is still well above the target set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to half the proportion of undernourished people to 10 percent latest by the year 2015. Asia and the Pacific is home to the largest number of people suffering from hunger while sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence of hunger, with one in three people being undernourished.

According to FAO's strategy there is ample evidence that rapid progress to reduce hunger can be made by applying a twin-track strategy that tackles both the causes and the consequences of extreme poverty and hunger. Interventions to improve food availability and incomes of the poor by enhancing their productive activities are as important as providing and implementing programmes that give the neediest families' direct and immediate access to food. In many places apart from natural disasters and warlike conflicts the absence of elementary agricultural infrastructure, poor farming practices, problems occurring from mismanagement as well as the over-exploitation of the environment and the Earth's fertility can be (one of many) causes and reasons for undernourishment. Various different approaches try to address this issue – in this Committee we want to examine and discuss one of them: Genetic Engineering.

## **Genetic engineering (focusing on nutrition)**

Genetic engineering is a manipulation of an organism's genetic DNA sequence. Integrated in the research field of biotechnology genetic engineering can provide tools and assistance for developments in the agricultural sector, e.g. addressing different kinds of cultivation conditions. Moreover genetic engineering has the potential – also recognized by the FAO – to help increasing the food production. It could lead to higher yields on marginal lands and improve food quality along with the health of many low-income communities through genetically engineered substances.

Due to the potential risk of genetic engineering this topic has become target of a very intensive discussion. However, FAO is aware of concerns posed by certain aspects of the gene manipulation, which can be categorized in two areas: The effects on human and animal health and the environmental consequences by upsetting the ecosystem balance.

## **Possible country positions**

- A) Genetic engineering is seen as a social responsibility of industrialized nations to reduce hunger
- B) Provision of biotechnical resources may cause further dependency on industrialized nations
- C) Gene manipulated agricultural products are no substitutes for other measures to decrease undernourishment