



FAO looks beyond the World Summit on Sustainable Development



Intensifying efforts to alleviate poverty and achieve food security through the sound use of natural resources is a major challenge for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The present and future dimensions of the challenge are enormous: 1.2 billion people in the world today live in conditions of extreme poverty, and three-quarters of them are in rural areas. Chronic undernourishment currently afflicts more

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) helps its member countries and other partners to fight hunger by working towards poverty alleviation, food security, rural development and sustainable livelihoods, especially in developing countries. Acting on a clear mandate from Member Governments, and implementing the tasks assigned to it by Agenda 21, FAO promotes and supports sustainable development in the vital sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

than 800 million people. With the world population expected to reach 8 billion by 2030, the need to produce food will increase pressure on the environment. The challenge can be met through development efforts coupled with sound environmental management, breaking the self-reinforcing cycle of poverty, hunger and environmental degradation that continues to menace land, water, fishery, forest and genetic resources.

THE KEY CHALLENGES

Examining the challenges of sustainable development, FAO finds two aspects of critical importance.

■ A strong political will and adequate capital resources are needed to alleviate poverty and defend people's right to be free from hunger.

There is an urgent need to reverse the decline in official development assistance to agriculture, forestry and fisheries and to increase the flow of direct foreign investment to poorer countries.

Significant investments are needed in the development of projects, programmes and policies promoting sustainable livelihoods through a broadened asset base of the rural poor. There is also a need for investments in appropriate technologies, in more effective and accountable institutions, and in diversification through improved rangeland and pastoral management, small-scale irrigation, livestock improvement and production, aquaculture and agroforestry.

■ Ecosystem-based approaches in fisheries, forestry and farming and good agricultural practices make it possible to produce more food and produce it sustainably through agricultural diversification and intensification.

There is a need for a new model of development that encourages the most sustainable, productive and appropriate use of land, water and genetic resources.

Increased awareness, support and investment are needed for sustainable use of natural resources at farm, community, watershed and ecosystem levels.

Proper implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is needed to enhance the contribution of the fisheries sector to food security and economic development.

Initiatives based on sustainable local forest management are an important part of rural development and sustainable livelihood strategies.

SUPPORTING SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS

The needs of small-scale producers, who are seriously threatened by the degradation of the natural resource base, must be addressed if the environment is to be well managed and agricultural productivity is to be improved. FAO provides support for ecologically sound farming techniques such as organic agriculture, conservation agriculture and integrated pest management, and for developing essential farmer support services such as microfinance, improved market access and extension services.

FAO'S CONTRIBUTION TO WSSD

Taking up the challenges of sustainable development, FAO implements a number of programmes that contribute directly to WSSD goals. They include:

- ▶ achieving World Food Summit (WFS) commitments, which provide a framework for many WSSD initiatives by linking increased productivity and sustainable natural resource use directly to opportunities to reduce poverty and hunger;
- ▶ promoting sustainable agricultural and rural development;
- ▶ supporting sustainable management of forest and mountain areas;
- ▶ promoting responsible fisheries and aquaculture;
- ▶ strengthening decision support tools to ensure effective implementation and integration of action plans;
- ▶ developing regulatory frameworks that consider the needs of the people who directly use and depend on natural resources.

Through action plans and specific action-oriented programmes, FAO provides the operational means for WSSD follow-up activities in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. The Organization also assists in development of the indicators and monitoring tools needed to assess results.

FAO will renew its efforts to assist member countries and other partners to build their capacity to implement Agenda 21. We will continue to provide a neutral forum for international discussions on emerging issues and policy options. Support will be focused on the following:

■ **STRENGTHENING OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.** FAO will support the development of national legislation related to management of shared resources, prevention of the spread of pests and diseases and enhancement of international trade. The Organization will also support implementation at all levels of existing legal instruments and agreements, such as the Code of

Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO/WHO Food Standards (Codex Alimentarius), the International Plant Protection Convention, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, with the associated Global Plan for Action.

■ **PROMOTING THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTICIPATORY SYSTEMS-ORIENTED APPROACHES, INCLUDING ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACHES, IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.** FAO will provide assistance in the preparation of good practice guidelines appropriate to national conditions. The guidelines would apply to soil use and water management, fisheries, crop production and protection, and animal production and health.

■ **HELPING GOVERNMENTS ADOPT GOOD PRACTICES AND POLICIES AND AN INTEGRATED APPROACH IN AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES.** FAO will encourage governments to integrate concerns of environmental sustainability into their policies and programmes in those sectors. It will support rights-based approaches that will ensure access of poor and vulnerable groups to natural resources and land tenure.

■ **SUPPORTING THE USE OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND EXISTING DATABASES FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AT ALL LEVELS.** Priority will be given to improving agri-environmental monitoring, early warning and support systems for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry and for food security. This includes planning for disaster preparedness and control of transboundary animal diseases. Other priorities are to raise the capacity of governments, non-governmental organizations and grassroots organizations to use technology, and to give the poor and disadvantaged, including women, the ability to access and share information. Through new technologies, FAO will promote and refine indicators and analytical tools.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT: FIVE YEARS LATER RENews COMMITMENT TO FIGHT HUNGER

In June 2002, world leaders met in Rome at the World Food Summit: five years later and renewed their commitment to reduce the number of hungry people in the world by at least half by 2015. The Anti-hunger Programme proposed by FAO outlines a framework for action, reducing hunger through agriculture and rural development and providing wider access to food. This programme is fully consistent with the 1996 WFS Plan of Action and in accord with the WSSD goals and actions.

The Programme estimates that it will take an additional public investment of US\$24 billion (which includes US\$5 billion for enhancing access to food) annually to attain the WFS goal. The investment should go to agriculture and rural development, and assistance to

those who cannot grow or buy adequate food. Priorities for investment include:

- improving the performance of small farms in poor rural and peri-urban communities;
- developing and conserving natural resources;
- expanding rural infrastructure and broadening market access;
- strengthening capacity for generating and disseminating knowledge;
- ensuring access to food to the most needy through safety nets and other direct assistance.

CONTACTS For further information, contact:

**Research, Extension and Training Division
Sustainable Development Department**
Tel. (+39) 06 57056196
Fax (+39) 06 57055246
Dietrich.Leihner@fao.org

Media Relations Branch
Tel. (+39) 06 57053625
Fax (+39) 06 57053729
media-relations@fao.org

**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy
www.fao.org