

**Statement of Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Opening of the High-Level Expert Forum on “How to Feed the World in 2050”

Monday, 12 October 2009

*Your Excellencies,
Honourable Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Friends and Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I wish first of all to welcome you to FAO and to express my appreciation for your presence among us today and tomorrow to participate in the High-Level Expert Forum on “How to Feed the World in 2050”, which is in fact a reflection of your dedication and commitment not only to the fight against hunger of today but also to the wellbeing of future generations.

The Forum, bringing together eminent experts and leading scientists in all aspects of agriculture and food security from around the world, represents an important step in the preparations for the World Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security to be held at FAO headquarters on 16, 17 and 18 November 2009.

We are gathered here to discuss the problems that will face agriculture and food security over the next four decades and identify tangible solutions to deal with them.

In the first half of this century, agriculture will have to face several challenges.

World population is expected to soar by 34% to reach 9.1 billion by 2050, with the entire 2.3 billion increment to take place in the developing countries. Further, not only will population growth take place entirely in developing countries but it will occur wholly in urban areas which will swell by 86% or nearly 3 billion people while rural populations shrink by 18%.

The combined effect of population growth, strong income growth and urbanization, with the associated shifts in diet structures towards more nutritious and higher quality foods, is expected to result in almost the doubling of demand for food, feed and fibre.

In the face of this, natural resources, namely land, water and biodiversity, will become more and more scarce because of increasing pressures. This means that a smaller rural workforce will have to produce more and better from fewer resources to meet future demand.

In addition to the growing resource scarcity, global agriculture will have to cope with the effects of climate change, notably higher temperatures, greater rainfall variability and more frequent extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts. Climate change will reduce water availability and lead to an increase in plant and animal pests and diseases. This will exert increased stress on production systems and the ecosystems underpinning them. Climate change is expected to reduce the productivity of agriculture in tropical low-latitude regions where many poor countries are located and where production growth should occur. Potential agricultural output up to 2080-2100 may be reduced by up to 30% in Africa and up to 21% in the developing countries as a whole.

Also agricultural commodities will become increasingly important for biofuel production as well as for other industrial purposes. Potential demand from the energy market is so large that it has the potential to change the fundamentals of agricultural market systems. This has already started to happen. In 2007/2008, total usage of coarse grains for the production of biofuels amounted to 110 million tonnes, or 10% of total coarse grain utilization. Global biofuel production is expected to increase by nearly 90% over the next 10 years, to reach 192 billion litres by 2018.

Agriculture will have no choice but to be more productive. Our analysis shows that future production increases would mostly come from yield growth and improved cropping intensity rather than from bringing more land into cultivation despite the fact that there are still ample land resources with potential for crop production particularly in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. And this will require substantial increases in investment in the sector – better access to modern inputs, more irrigation systems, machinery and implements, more roads and better rural infrastructures, as well as more skilled and better trained farmers.

One particular challenge that I want to highlight is water. To reach our food production goals we need simultaneously to expand the land area under irrigation while using proportionately less water. Investment in improved water control and management through short-, medium- and long-term programmes and projects should constitute a priority action in our efforts in mitigating climate change. The case of Africa is compelling. Only 7% of Africa's arable land is irrigated, and the figure drops to 4% for sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 38% for Asia. The continent uses only 4% percent of its water resources, compared to 20% in Asia. This means that on 93% of African land, life, or I should say people's survival, depends on rainfall, which climate change has turned into an increasingly unreliable factor.

In December 2008, on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference on "Water for Agriculture and Energy in Africa", organized by FAO with the support of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, National Investment Briefs for all African nations for a total amount of 65 billion US dollars were prepared by FAO following discussions with the authorities of each individual country. They represent assessed investment envelopes for short, medium and long-term water control projects that are needed to meet the continent's future food and energy demands.

The technology gap between countries also needs to be bridged. Capacity building through knowledge transfer using North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation arrangements should be strengthened to achieve sustainable increases in agricultural production and productivity.

Naturally, neither increased funding nor record harvests will by themselves be enough to secure that everyone has the food they need. If people go hungry today it is not because the world is not producing enough food but because such food is not produced by the 70% of the world's poor whose main livelihood is agriculture and who cannot afford to eat their fill.

So the challenge is not only to increase global future production but to increase it where it is mostly needed and by those who need it most. There should be a special focus on smallholder farmers, women and rural households and their access to land, water, high-quality seeds, fertilizers and other modern inputs, as well as financial services including micro-credit. They need to intensify their production systems. Judicious use of chemical fertilizers is key to boosting the productivity of these farmers. It is clear in this regard that while organic agriculture contributes to poverty reduction and should be promoted, it cannot feed 6.8 billion today and 9.1 billion in 2050.

Feeding everyone in 2050 adequately and safely will also require poverty reduction strategies, social safety nets for both poor producers and consumers and also for rural development programmes. The establishment of necessary socio-economic conditions and proper mechanisms is needed to improve small farmers' access to inputs and poor people's access to food.

How we respond to these challenges now will determine how well we can feed the world tomorrow. But, just as important, we must also seek to secure everyone's food security today. That means ending the plight of the one billion people presently suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition by acting sensibly and decisively to eradicate food insecurity completely and rapidly.

The goal of ending hunger is not only in pursuit of moral and ethical considerations, but also for good economic reasons. Agricultural growth is key to expansion of the entire economy. Empirical evidence shows that GDP growth originating in agriculture is at least twice as effective in combating poverty as GDP growth originating in other sectors of the economy.

We have to build on successes and best practices. Several countries, although tempered by the recent food, financial and economic crises, have realized remarkable progress towards the achievement of hunger reduction goals, including in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

What we are paying for today, with the rising numbers of hungry people and the rapid spread of malnourishment, is our inability to develop or revive local food production in the most needy countries after more than twenty years of neglect of agriculture and under investment in the sector. Now we have to learn from our past mistakes.

While the number of hungry people increased, paradoxically resources to agriculture have decreased. Agriculture's share in total official development assistance (ODA) fell from 17% in 1980 to 3.8% in 2006. Presently it stands at around 5%. Yet back in the 1970s, to avert the risk of hunger and mass famine in Asia and Latin America, the world spent 17% of ODA in building irrigation schemes, rural roads, storage facilities, seed production systems and fertiliser plants, which underpinned the Green Revolution.

The events of the last three years have demonstrated the fragility of the global food system and the lack of coherence and efficiency in the governance of world food security. Responding to the food insecurity crisis in an effective and sustainable way requires not only relevant strategies, policies and programmes, but also coordination in decision-making as well as in the implementation and monitoring of actions. That is why a reformed and strengthened Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is crucial.

If we want the farm sector to play its full role as an engine of growth, especially in the agriculture-based economies, the world should devise an agricultural system that offers farmers in both developed and developing countries the possibility of earning a decent income under similar conditions as others. To that end, agricultural and trade policies need to be developed, together with rules and mechanisms to ensure not only free but also equitable agricultural trade.

So as you can see, there is a whole series of fundamental problems that need to be resolved urgently. Proper decisions have to be made at the highest political level and required follow-up actions have to be taken responsibly and timely.

This Forum, through its conclusions and recommendations, will contribute to the debate and outcome of the World Summit on Food Security scheduled next November when Heads of State and Government from FAO's 192 Member Nations will take important decisions on policies and strategies to ensure that everyone has sufficient, safe and nutritious food on their table, both today and tomorrow.

In 2050 what to eat will no longer be a problem for many of those of us already getting on in years. But I see it as my solemn duty, as it is surely of us all gathered here today, to do all we can to banish the spectre of hunger forever and make sure that our children and grandchildren can eat their fill and enjoy a healthy life.

Today and tomorrow, a lot of media will be turned to Rome, to this very Room, to this very gathering, with high expectations.

You have many questions before you to answer, just to cite a few:

- Will the world be able to produce enough food at affordable prices by 2050? Do we have enough resources and how can we use them more efficiently?
- What type of technologies will we need? How can we ensure that smallholder and women farmers are not bypassed, and do actually benefit from these technologies?
- What should be done to ensure that farmers in both the developed and developing countries remain in agricultural activities? How can they be provided with incentives through non-distorting support?
- How can the resources required for investment in developing countries' agriculture be mobilized from both public and private sectors? What kind of incentives do we need to that effect ?
- What is the potential for Africa to ensure its food security? Why has the performance of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa lagged over the last decades?
- What are the potentials, and how can agriculture contribute to climate change mitigation?

Surely the task in front of us is enormous, but I am confident we will rise to the challenge.

As for me personally, while looking ahead to the results of your deliberations, I would like to wish you every success in your work.

*Chers amis et collègues,
Mesdames et Messieurs,*

J'ai maintenant le plaisir de vous présenter l'orateur principal de ce Forum qui est bien connu de beaucoup d'entre vous, M. Alain de Janvry, Professeur d'économie agricole à l'Université de Californie, Berkeley.

M. de Janvry est l'un des principaux économistes du développement agricole, un homme de réputation internationale, largement cité pour ses nombreux travaux dans différents domaines et pour sa grande contribution au sein de plusieurs organisations bilatérales et internationales dans lesquelles sa pensée a souvent eu une influence.

Il est né en France et a étudié en France et en Espagne dans les domaines des mathématiques et de la philosophie. Il a obtenu son diplôme d'ingénieur agronome à l'Institut National Agronomique de Paris. Il a aussi un master en statistiques et un master et un doctorat en économie agricole de l'Université de Berkeley, Californie.

Ses domaines de travail couvrent les problèmes de politiques agricoles et de développement rural, l'analyse de la pauvreté, l'analyse de l'impact des programmes sociaux, les innovations technologiques dans l'agriculture et la gestion des ressources de propriété commune. Il a axé ses travaux sur le monde en développement, notamment en Amérique latine, en Asie, en Afrique subsaharienne et au Proche-Orient.

Monsieur de Janvry, je voudrais vous exprimer mes vifs remerciements d'avoir accepté d'être parmi nous aujourd'hui et de prononcer le discours de présentation à notre Forum. Monsieur de Janvry, vous avez la parole.

Merci.