



30 November 2012

Private Sector Partnerships Meeting

Distinguished Representatives of Private Sector Associations and Federations,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to FAO and thank you for attending the Private Sector Partnerships Meeting.

The men and women in this room today represent a total of over five thousand companies.

You have been invited here to start an open dialogue between the private sector and FAO. We will discuss ways in which we can work together towards what I hope is a goal shared among us: that of a sustainable, hunger-free world.

We want to present to you our ideas and listen to your comments.

At the end of the day, I hope we will have set the basis for a fruitful collaboration between FAO, federations and associations.



The private sector has an important contribution to give to FAO. But this contribution has not always been recognized or valued. This is beginning to change.

Since I took up office in January 2012, I have made opening-up FAO to partners a top priority.

In this effort, we have established liaison office spaces for civil society, cooperatives and farmers' organizations at FAO. Soon we will open a similar such space for the private sector as well.

We are also preparing an FAO strategy for partnerships with the private sector, which has received valuable comments from you, especially from the International Agri-Food Network.

The strategy is important for many reasons.

- It helps assure FAO's neutrality and impartiality.
- It lays down the principles on which partnerships shall be based, building on the work of the Global Compact
- It makes our collaboration transparent;
- It sets guidelines that will allow our decentralized office network to engage the private sector.

We have presented a draft of the strategy to Member States this month. While Member States recognized the importance of the strategies for partnerships with the private sector, they also raised a series of issues.



They stress the importance of maintaining FAO impartiality and neutrality; they requested clearer links between resource mobilization with the private sector and our overall program and they asked that the United Nations' experience in working with the private sector also be considered especially as regards non-profit corporations and input supply organizations.

We are addressing the comments raised and will present a reviewed document in March. We count on your continued support to this process.

FAO wants to focus its partnerships around the five strategic objectives that it is proposing to members and that, hopefully, will be endorsed next week. They are: first, ending hunger; second, increasing sustainable production; third, reducing rural poverty; fourth, enabling more inclusive and efficient food systems; and, fifth, increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

There are many ongoing examples of engagement between FAO and the private sector. For example, FAO participates in the Save Food Initiative the aim of which is to diminish food loss and waste. Let me mention just one number to illustrate the importance of this issue: consumers waste over 220 million tons of food per year, practically the same amount of food produced in sub-Saharan Africa.

This is directly related to sustainability. This was the central theme of the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference, which also clearly established a link with hunger and poverty.

It is very simple: we cannot call development sustainable if nearly 870 million people are left behind, victims of hunger.



We need to be sustainable in the way we consume and in the way we produce food. In both cases, the private sector has a key role to play.

In order to ensure food security, countries must meet the growing demand for food while reducing agriculture's environmental footprint.

FAO is advocating for a shift of paradigm from our current input intensive farming to sustainable intensification.

We call it the Save and Grow approach. Finding the right balance between the appropriate use of external inputs and natural methods is a part of this shift.

As I was saying, there is ongoing collaboration between FAO and the private sector.

However, in many cases these are individual, isolated efforts. This is what we need to change if we are to have a significant impact.

The proposal we presented to Members on partnerships with the private sector envisages six areas of engagement:

- Joint development projects and technical programmes;
- Normative, standard setting work;
- Policy dialogue;
- Advocacy and communication;
- Knowledge management, and Resource mobilization.



Many private companies already contribute financial resources to fight hunger and poverty.

However, I want to say that it is a mistake to view the private sector only as a new source of funding for our programs.

There are many other ways the private sector can contribute to food security and, in many cases, already does. Some examples are:

- Providing in-kind contributions like agricultural inputs and logistical support;
- Providing services and support to workers and the communities in which they live;
- Building capacity in rural communities; and
- Sharing knowledge and experiences.

My personal experience with the Zero Hunger Strategy in Brazil shows that perhaps the greatest contribution the private sector can give is something else: the political support to food security.

The support of civil society and of the private sector is necessary to build consensus and mobilize all stakeholders towards the goal of a hunger-free world.

Increasingly, the private sector is giving signs of such a political commitment. This can be seen in the World Economic Fora, in the business meetings held at the G20 and G8 and in its participation in the Committee on World Food Security, or CFS.

The CFS has the participation of governments, civil society and the private sector. It is the most inclusive multilateral body to discuss food security and the cornerstone of the new global governance system we are building.



In May, the Committee gave a good example of what we can accomplish by working together by endorsing the “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security”.

What does this mean in practical terms? Simple: for the first time, we have a set of guidelines that helps ensure that the rights and access to natural resources by the population, especially rural poor and indigenous communities, are safeguarded.

The private sector played an important role in this process. Now the challenge is to implement the Voluntary Guidelines at country level. We ask for your continued support in this stage.

In 2013, the Committee on World Food Security will discuss another issue of crucial importance for food security: the principles on Responsible Agricultural Investments.

Given all the discussion on so-called land grabbing, this is one of the most sensitive issues being debated today.

It is also one of the most important, because when we say that we need to increase investment in agriculture we do not mean just any investment.

We need to assure that the investments meet a certain set of conditions that assure that they are responsible and contribute to food security and local development.



But we still do not have an exact, consensus definition of what responsible investment means.

This is what will be discussed in the Committee on World Food Security, in a process that I trust will be as transparent and participative as the one that led to the approval of the Voluntary Guidelines.

An important element for this debate will be the seven suggested principles that were prepared based on discussions held between FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD and the World Bank.

These principles are:

- First, respecting land and resource rights;
- Second, ensuring food security;
- Third, ensuring transparency, good governance and a proper enabling environment;
- Fourth, consultation and participation;
- Fifth, responsible agro-enterprise investment;
- Sixth, social sustainability; and,
- Seventh, environmental sustainability.

As I said, these seven principles provide a starting point for the discussion. There are many concerns that have been raised by civil society organizations.



For instance, a possibly weak linkage to human rights and the lack of clarity on how the first principle may inhibit public land redistribution processes.

They are valid issues that should be debated by all actors.

I hope that once again the private sector participates constructively in this debate. The end result will be much stronger if there have been frank and inclusive negotiations.

And I hope that, once approved, you and the companies you represent are willing to embrace these principles; in the same way that I hope you can embrace the Voluntary Guidelines.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that there can be no freedom from hunger – there can ultimately be no food security - without the active participation of all actors: international and regional institutions, governments, civil society and the private sector.

A good example of this engagement is a partnership that FAO, the African Union Commission and the Lula Institute launched last week in Ethiopia.



Under African leadership, with the technical expertise of FAO and renewed commitment to fight hunger and the political support of the former president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, we will together promote a new strategy for food security in Africa.

This is not about a new initiative, it's about joining our forces to scale up successful programs, link different actions for better results and, in general, support African countries in their quest for food security.

This new strategic partnership is open and needs the participation of other international, regional and national partners, including the private sector.

There are many ways to cooperate, as I have already mentioned. They include "in kind" contributions, logistical support, sharing knowledge and expertise and, of course, donations.

FAO is in the process of setting up a multi-donor trust fund to allow private sector companies to contribute financially to the organization's work, following rules that guarantee our independence and neutrality.



I welcome and encourage you to join this partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen

Before concluding, let me touch on a final topic.

The year 2014 will be the International Year of Family Farming, a topic of utmost importance for FAO and for food security.

I wish to highlight this because public institutions, both national and international, will need support from the private sector to realize the potential of agricultural innovation in family farming, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Let's not forget that farmers themselves, large and small, are an important part of the private sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope this meeting will herald the beginning of a new era of collaboration between FAO and the private sector.

I invite you to an open and constructive discussion with FAO.

Thank you for your attention.