



4 June 2013

The State of Food and Agriculture 2013: Food systems for better nutrition

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's FAO's flagship report *The State of Food and Agriculture*, SOFA as we call it, is about global food systems and nutrition.

The subject could not be more important and timely.

As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approaches in 2015, we can see progress in the fight against hunger.

Around 40 countries have already met the MDG target of halving the percentage of hunger by 2015.

But with 870 million people still hungry and 26 percent of all children stunted, we still have a long way ahead.

And hunger is only one form of malnutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies, or 'hidden hunger', and overweight and obesity afflict almost 2 billion people in the world.

At least 1.4 billion people in all countries, from all income levels, are overweight, with a third of them obese.

The toll of malnutrition in terms of human suffering and health is enormous. And the costs in terms of lost productivity and health care are also huge: up to US\$3.5 trillion per year, or US\$500 per person globally.

Particularly dangerous is child and maternal malnutrition -- which plays a key role in perpetuating poverty and hunger.



As the world debates the Post-2015 Development Agenda, FAO's message is that we must strive for nothing less than the eradication of hunger and malnutrition.

We are confident that this message is widely shared, and will be embraced increasingly in the future.

We are encouraged to see that the development community is paying more and more attention to malnutrition.

The UN Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenge has energized the UN system around its five elements.

Initiatives such as "Scaling Up Nutrition" contribute to putting the spotlight on the fight against malnutrition.

Nutrition will be on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the G8 in mid-June, while the links between agriculture and nutrition will be theme of a new high-level panel initiated by the UK government.

What do we need to do to eradicate malnutrition? *The State of Food and Agriculture 2013* shows the way and my colleagues will detail.

Let me just say that getting there will require political commitment and leadership at the highest levels and broad-based partnerships.

Fighting malnutrition requires concerted and coordinated action on health, sanitation, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability and social protection. All are needed.

This has implications for institutions of governance, including those of the food system.

Food security is at the very top of the international sustainable development agenda.

Hunger is now recognized as a key political issue.

Political commitment is the necessary foundation of any successful effort to promote good nutrition.

Nutrition challenges are daunting in scale and complexity. But one thing is clear. Good nutrition must begin with food and agriculture. This report provides a sound background and strengthens our knowledge base as to what needs to be done.



But no report can substitute for the political will needed in order to move forward. FAO is ready to lead and join the broad partnerships needed to overcome malnutrition.

We aim to work with all partners under the leadership of governments to achieve concrete results at country level through strengthened commitment, appropriate governance and support for feasible, evidence-based policy frameworks.

I thank you for your interest in *The State of Food and Agriculture 2013*, FAO's flagship annual publication.