



5 June 2013

Book Launch on Food Security: Century Challenges and Responses

Opening speech

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here and participate in the launch of the book “Food Security: Century Challenges and Responses”.

The book was prepared by a team of Chinese experts working in FAO, led by Dr. He Changchui, a former senior FAO colleague and a close friend of mine.

They reflect on the many issues that explain food insecurity and what we need to do address them.

Despite the progress made in improving food security in recent decades, 870 million people still suffer from hunger.

Pressure on natural resources is on the rise. We are seeing land degradation and water scarcity in different parts of the world, caused by overuse, misuse and worsened by climate change.

Economic crises have also affected hunger. In fact, the world today produces enough food for all but hunger persists. And insufficient access is its main cause: people do not always have the money to buy the food they need or the means to produce it themselves.



Ladies and gentlemen,

China has made significant progress in the fight against hunger since 1990.

It has reduced the proportion of undernourishment from 21.4 percent to 11.5 percent between 1990 and 2012. At this rate, it will reach the Millennium Development Goal hunger target of halving the proportion of hungry people before 2015.

Economic growth, agricultural development and concerted government policies help to explain this success.

Today, China manages to feed 20 percent of the world's population with only 9 percent of the world's arable land. Its cereal production has been growing for nearly one decade.

However, Asia, including China, is still home to nearly two-thirds of the world's poor and chronically hungry people.

In this connection, China still has much work to do to promote agriculture and food security in an environmentally-sustainable and equitable manner.

This book will help this sharing of experiences and lessons learned. It offers international perspectives on a range of issues relating to sustainable agricultural development and food security.

One important message in this book is that we need to deal with production, distribution and consumption through a holistic, food system approach.

We need to shift to more sustainable approaches, producing more with less and lowering the environmental impacts of food production and agriculture-based livelihoods. At FAO, we call this approach "Save and grow."

We also need to promote a new culture of consumption, to reduce food waste and loss, from the production and marketing of food to the table.

We need to have clear priorities, and an innovative approach.

This means increasing the resilience of agricultural and food systems, to protect them against the effects of climate change and future political and economic shocks;



And it means placing more emphasis on rights-based approaches, including the right to food, and the right to secure and sustainable tenure of land, forestry, fisheries and natural resources.

Ladies and gentlemen,

China is working to meet its responsibilities as an emerging world leader.

To transform into reality our common vision of truly sustainable food security, China needs the world, just as the world needs China.

I am confident that this book, written by Chinese experts with an international perspective, will serve as a useful reference for Chinese readers working on decision-making and policy formulation and implementation. Thank you.