



***30 September 2013***

## **AMIS The Global Food Information Group Meeting**

Let me welcome all of you, especially

Mr Joe Glauber, Chief Economist of the United States Department of Agriculture,

Ms Jo Evans, First Assistant Secretary of the Trade and Market Access Division of Australia,

Distinguished members of the Global Food Information Group,

And FAO colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to FAO for the fourth session of this group.

Food prices can have an important impact on food security. As such, the work you do is an important contribution to FAO's mandate of a hunger-free and sustainable world.

Just over a year ago, a drought in the United States caused a sharp rise in maize prices. But unlike 2007-2008 and 2010-11, prices did not spiral out of control.

The outlook for international food commodity markets finally looks calmer this year. There are many factors that help explain this. One reason is improved global governance.

And the Agricultural Market Information System is central to this. Last year's spike was the first test for AMIS. And AMIS proved to be very helpful.

Through AMIS, we increased market transparency and provided timely and reliable information. This sharing of information meant that different actors could make better-informed decisions. And it also helped to achieve a better coordinated response, avoiding panic buying and unilateral export restrictions.



Action on the communication front complemented the work carried out by AMIS. The UN Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security repeatedly and energetically called for calm and coordination.

And among many other initiatives, last October FAO hosted a ministerial summit to discuss food prices. Next week, we will have the second edition of this meeting. You are all invited and we would all be delighted to have you here.

I believe that these efforts helped prevent a snowball effect from happening. But this does not mean that our food price issues are over. There is a lot to be done, from the global to the local level, from the political to the policy level.

International prices are still above their historical levels and are expected to remain volatile over the next years. This is the “new normal” that we need to adapt to.

In my opinion, there are two main issues that need to be tackled.

First, protect the poor. They are especially vulnerable to price jumps, because they do not have the means to react quickly. In this context, strengthening social protection is crucial.

And, second, identify how we can use high prices for the benefit of poor small-scale farmers in the world. Let's not forget that three decades of falling food prices had a catastrophic effect in the agricultural sector of poor and developing countries worldwide.

The work of AMIS is an important contribution to deal with food prices. Last year AMIS proved that it was useful. Your challenge is to find ways to make it work even better.

You can count on the support of FAO and of all the international organizations that are part of the AMIS Secretariat.

I wish you a successful meeting. Thank you very much.