



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

A statement by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva

***13 September 2012***

***FAO-EBRD CONFERENCE “PRIVATE SECTOR FOR FOOD  
SECURITY”***

***Promoting Private Agricultural Investment and Trade from the  
Black Sea to the Mediterranean***

**Mr. President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Sir  
Suma Chakrabarti,**

**Distinguished Agriculture Minister of Turkey, His Excellency Mehmet Mehdi  
Eker**

**Private Sector CEOs and representatives,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**



Good morning.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Turkey for welcoming me to the beautiful and historic city of Istanbul.

This part of the world that gave birth to the expression, “You reap what you sow.” Well, we are here to sow the seeds for stronger partnerships and a better future together.

I also wish to thank the EBRD and its President for the extraordinary job done as co-organizer of this Conference, along with FAO.

My presence here today reaffirms the strong interest I have in working closely with the EBRD in expanding FAO’s commitment to promoting private-sector investment in the fight against hunger.

FAO was created 66 years ago with one main mission: to help ensure humanity’s freedom from hunger.

Although we have seen significant production increases in the last decades and have enough access to food for the entire world population, around 900 million people still suffer from hunger.

When I say “we”, I am referring to FAO, the UN system, governments, the private sector, civil society, other institutions and partners. Neither FAO nor any other single agency or government can reach this goal working alone.

Let me be clear: there can be no freedom from hunger – there can be no food security - without the active participation of all sectors of society, including the private sector.

And in a global world, it is not possible to achieve food security in one country alone or even in only one region. We need to work together.



That is why since I took up office as Director-General, a focus of my attention has been on reaching out to partners. We have already opened liaison offices for cooperatives at FAO Headquarters. We will do the same for the civil society organizations, the private sector and the academia.

FAO is also in the process of finalizing its Strategy for Partnerships, including those with the private sector.

Specifically, the Strategy aims to:

enable the provision of services and goods in isolated areas;

increase the involvement of the private sector in discussions and fora related to FAO's mandate; and

enhance the private sector's participation in FAO's activities, both through financial and non-financial contributions.

We envision six areas of engagement with the private sector. They include:

One - policy dialogue. FAO is looking at ways to enhance the participation of the private sector in relevant governing bodies, such as the Committee on World Food Security. I will say more about this in a minute.

Two - norms and standard-setting. FAO intends to set up permanent consultation platforms in specific sectors.

Three - development and technical programs. The private sector can complement FAO's technical work at international and field level.

The three other areas of engagement are advocacy and communication; knowledge management and dissemination, and mobilization of resources.



It is a mistake to look at partnerships with the private sector only as a new source of funding.

The private sector can help international organizations play a significant role in food emergency situations. It can help to accelerate FAO's impact and effectiveness on the ground.

At the same time, many private companies are part of the donor community. They provide financial resources, and in-kind contributions like agricultural inputs and logistical support.

There is something else that is not easy to quantify, but that is crucial: the political support that the private sector can give to food security and food safety programs.

We need to build consensus and mobilize all stakeholders towards this goal. With the private sector onboard, national and international efforts to fight hunger have added legitimacy.

Increasingly, the private sector is giving signs of this political commitment, as shown by discussions held during the World Economic Forums and in the business meetings held in the G20 and G8.

FAO has been encouraging private sector participation in major debates in the Committee on World Food Security, that now has the active participation of the private sector and civil society, face to face with Governments.

The "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security", adopted last May by the World Food Security, are one good example of what we can accomplish together. Their approval are the result of a consensus between governments, civil



society organizations, private sector representatives, international organizations and academics.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means that, for the first time we have a set of global guidelines that will help governments safeguard the rights of people to own or access land, forests and fisheries.

FAO stands ready to assist governments to nationally implement these guidelines. And we call on the private sector to embrace these guidelines, too.

Now, the Committee on World Food Security will discuss another issue of interest to the private sector and crucial importance for food security: the principles on Responsible Agricultural Investments. This is a matter of urgency that, again, we can only tackle together.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I also want to discuss international food prices, which is high on the agenda these days.

FAO has been closely monitoring developments and feels that the situation we face today is very different from four years ago. We have better overall stocks. Rice prices are stable. There is a different economic situation, where we do not see a strong demand pull and the prices of oil and other non-agricultural commodities remain lower than before.

FAO believes that the current price situation does not justify talk about a world food crisis.

I want to be very clear in this: there is no reason to panic. But we do need to remain vigilant.



What can we learn from the lessons of 2008? Perhaps the most important lesson is to work together in a coordinated way to respond to rising food prices.

Already, we are seeing better information sharing and greater market transparency, through the establishment of the Agricultural Market Information System (or, AMIS).

AMIS is a new instrument set up by the G20 in 2011 to enhance food-market transparency and provide quality and timely information. It encourages coordination and swift policy action in response to market uncertainties.

The private sector can play an important role in improving this transparency. We hope that it can participate more actively in this effort. There is no coordination possible in the food commodity markets without the participation of the private sector.

In previous price movements we have seen excessive speculation add to price volatility. This time around, some private companies and financial institutions have already taken a public stance against speculation on agricultural commodities. So have the Holy See and civil society organizations. This moral restraint is a welcome development and, hopefully, will be followed by others.

I will meet later today with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. I also count on his support our message that ending hunger is a moral imperative.

Let me add that ending hunger also makes political, social and economic sense.

This is why FAO is fully behind the “Zero Hunger Challenge” launched in June by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, at the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development.



The idea behind the challenge is to mobilize political commitment. The UN Secretary-General's objectives fully coincide with those of FAO.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

We cannot address the challenge of ending hunger alone. Only with your strong support and leadership, can we solve the hunger challenge and leave a better world for future generations. FAO is ready to join this new era of collaboration with the private sector and undertake these challenges with everyone here.

Thank you very much.