



FAO CONFERENCE - 38th session - Plenary

Review of the State of Food and Agriculture

Address by the Portuguese Secretary of State for Agriculture

Mr. José Diogo Albuquerque

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Excellencies,

- Mr. Graziano Silva, Director-General of FAO,
- Distinguished Colleagues of the European Union and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries,
- Honourable Ministers,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Despite the progress we have made, approximately 870 million people remain undernourished, which is totally unacceptable for mankind as a whole. FAO's work is essential to advance the international food security programme and governments around the world have a responsibility to contribute to solving this problem.

Portugal is strongly committed to intensifying cooperation with FAO towards the eradication of hunger, and we believe that the coordination of strategies

and sharing of expertise in designing agricultural policies are means available to us all to achieve this end.

The African continent is a recognised area of strategic intervention due to not only its current levels of deprivation but also its potential for agricultural development.

The new FAO Office in Lisbon and the recent signing of the Portugal/FAO Cooperation Framework Agreement will certainly contribute to disseminate accumulated information, knowledge and expertise about the territory, with a view to increasing and improving agricultural production in Africa, particularly in the countries of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) with which Portugal has a natural relationship of proximity.

In order to solve the world food problem, FAO's support to this group of countries is crucial. The CPLP is an area with huge potential for economic development, with a population of 250 million, about 28 million of whom are in a state of malnutrition.

In 2011, CPLP's ministers approved the Strategy for Food and Nutritional Security aiming to build a consistent model of governance that joins efforts to fight hunger in its member States. From the outset, FAO has joined and supported this initiative, a contribution I wish to highlight and praise.

Also very recently, FAO has sponsored a study on the "State of Food and Nutritional Security Governance and the Role of Family Farming in CPLP countries", which provides an important contribution to support the planning of future actions to be implemented in this field.

Given the expected growth in global food demand and the limitations of natural resources, the challenges related to food security urge the need to sustainably increase food supply.

In the European Union, the on-going review of the Common Agricultural Policy aims at greater sustainability and higher efficiency in food production. Since the EU is a major world trade partner, the changes now being discussed will certainly make a significant contribution to increasing supply and stabilising world prices. On the other hand, changes recurrently made to EU food regulations have a considerable influence on the definition of global food standards.

In Portugal, food self-sufficiency is 81% in value. We have chosen as a medium-term objective for the agricultural sector the increase of domestic production.

Portugal has been promoting investment support to improve agricultural and forest productivity and the setting-up of young farmers. A Land Exchange was recently created to facilitate access to land, particularly by young people. These are measures that simultaneously allow increasing job creation, which is crucial to maintain the social balance in the critical period we are going through.

In addition, we have been working on improving the producers' negotiating capacity and on stabilising prices, by promoting concentration of supply and creating rules that increase transparency and provide a better balance in the distribution of value along the food supply chain.

We have also sought to increase the resilience of our agricultural systems, since Portugal is geographically located in a region of the world with great vulnerability to climate change, where investments in the management of water resources are a top priority.

We have half a million hectares of irrigable area and we have made a great effort to encourage investment in increasing and improving irrigated area. Over the last decade, about €1.1 billion were invested, corresponding to a 360,000 ha area benefited. This investment not only gave a decisive boost to

the completion of the large Alqueva Multi-purpose Project, which will add 100,000 ha of irrigated area by 2015, but also tripled the use of pressure irrigation systems (from 22% to 68% of irrigated area), thus improving irrigation efficiency.

We have considerable accumulated irrigation skills and expertise not only in the Portuguese territory but also in Africa, and therefore we can provide a good contribution to FAO's goals in terms of cooperation and knowledge exchange in this field.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the work ahead in fighting hunger is enormous and challenges are huge. But it is also important to note that we must not fear these challenges, because I am certain they can be overcome.

It is our duty to use a good coordination of strategies and exchange of skills as tools to do just that.

Thank you.