

Statement on behalf of HUNGARY

To be delivered by Dr. Attila István Simon

Rome, June 9, 2015

Mr. Chairperson,

Director-General of FAO,

Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to FAO on behalf of the Hungarian Government, for the selection of this important and timely topic for this Conference. Although we have accomplished relevant achievements in the past 25 years in fighting hunger and extreme poverty, more efforts are still needed to reach Zero Hunger as soon as possible. We are aware of the fact that most of the hungry and extremely poor in the world are living in rural areas; therefore **the development of agriculture is a key issue** besides job creation. Improving living conditions of the rural population by encouraging **local production and sale** is of great importance to Hungary. In line with the principle of **short supply chain**, we provide more and more opportunities to **small producers** to deliver their products directly to local schools or kindergartens.

Thus, we can secure a decent standard of living to farmers, and at the same time provide a **diverse and healthy diet** in catering. The so-called "**Catering Model Scheme**" and the "**School Fruit Scheme**" in Hungary are important initiatives, through which the dietary habits of our children become healthier.

In view of the UN International Year's themes last year and this year, family farms and soils are closely related to the agenda of the Conference. **Family farms** are important to the Hungarian Government because of their important role in

responsible management of natural resources, in production of excellent food and in creation of rural employment. Family farmers merit all support, as they greatly contribute to food security both at local and global level. **Soils and food security** are closely related, as they determine the countries' food production capacities. For Hungary, soils are especially great assets: 85 % of the total area of our country, nearly 8 million hectares are covered with excellent quality soils. To achieve food security, and to preserve biological diversity, we need to safeguard our soil.

As you know, in numerous regions of the world, the primary source of income for rural populations is agriculture and animal husbandry. We should strive to create an enabling environment for rural smallholders and family farmers; if they have access to the necessary resources and markets, they are able to get out of the vicious circle of poverty.

The **diversification** of these activities – above all the **primary processing** and **direct sale of products** – and **related activities** contribute to achieving our goal, but non-agricultural activities and services can also be considered as complementary methods. In addition, **social protection programmes and social assistance** might also be effective. However, as I have mentioned, we consider access to work particularly important. Through **public employment schemes** we provide jobs to the unemployed living in less developed rural regions of Hungary, thus helping them to return to the world of work.

Pope Francis said a few months ago that the “*the hungry ask for dignity, not charity*”. – Well, we consider work an inevitable stage of the way leading to dignity.

We agree with the findings of the FAO's study: **social protection programmes can only bring results, if they are in harmony with the sustainable development of agriculture.**

The role of **training and education** is also important, because it can be an effective tool in the reduction of poverty and in increasing agricultural productivity. In Hungary, we operate an extensive **agricultural advisory service system** and we educate future agrarians in **vocational schools** and **universities of agriculture**. In the frame of our FAO scholarship programme we have also trained hundreds of students from low-income countries. Currently, the Hungarian agricultural education is being completely transformed; this can also contribute to poverty reduction in the long term.

We should not forget that permanent improvement in rural livelihoods can only be achieved with the participation of the local people and NGOs. FAO's professional guidelines and adequate financial tools provided by financial institutions and the private sector are also very much needed. As a representative of the Hungarian Government, I would like to assure the FAO and all Member States that Hungary remains a committed partner in this work!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the message of a well-known proverb:

“Fine words do not produce food”.

Thank you for your attention!