



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

3rd FAO ministerial meeting on agricultural markets and prices

Theme: Governance and International Commodity Markets

Rome, October, 6th 2014

Statement by the Portuguese Minister of Agriculture and Sea,

Mrs. Assunção Cristas

Dear Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *meu Prezado Amigo Professor José Graziano da Silva*,

Chairperson, Dear Colleagues and Ministers,

I would like to congratulate on FAO's Director General for convening this ministerial meeting on agricultural markets and prices. This year's theme underlines our role as decision makers and highlights our responsibilities towards our nations and peoples. As the concept note points out, "price volatility is a major issue affecting all agricultural commodities". And whatever affects the commodities markets, it ultimately affects us all. From a global point of view – which is the one of FAO – there is no time to lose when we look at the projections of world population. How are we supposed to deal, in a comprehensive and responsible way, with 9 billion of citizens in 2050?

Portugal has a food deficit of around 30% but we are committed **to achieve agri-food self-sufficiency by 2020 in gross value, i.e. to export more than we import**. Portugal's food exports have been increasing by more than 12% every year since 2000. This is about promoting



international trade and cooperation: we believe that open economies are the way to go in a growing interdependent world. Shared concerns call for joint reflection, common approaches and deeper international cooperation.

Last year I shared with you the Portuguese experience of our **DIALOGUE PLATFORM**, which brought together the major players of the food supply chain: producers, processors and retailers, with the Government as a facilitator, in a self-regulatory context. The major step of this process was the increased transparency and confidence between stakeholders.

I also mentioned the **Portuguese Speaking Countries Community**, which, through its *Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security*, should reach over 28 million people. FAO has supported this initiative since the beginning. As a member, Portugal contributes with funds and provides knowledge and expertise to its implementation.

This year, dear Colleagues, I would like to share with you the experience of an initiative that Portugal has launched last January called **SKAN – Sharing Knowledge Agrifood Network**.

SKAN aims at promoting sharing of knowledge and technology between Europe, Africa and Latin America in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors. It strives to achieve this goal through an integrative approach that includes:



- a) Reinforcing the dialogue between science and industry – which means that we put scientific and technological development, as well as **innovation**, at the cornerstone of SKAN's activity;
- b) Integrating existing available resources, such as other networks and platforms, databases and available know-how of the scientific community or of the private sector;
- c) Enabling the development of international projects in consortium. We want to bring together players from all over the involved countries by promoting a result – oriented strategy;
- d) Empowering local agents to ensure the sustainability of the projects and the central role of local communities, families, women and young people.

WHY have we decided to create SKAN?

Because we felt three needs to be fulfilled:

- (1) **The need to be consistent with words – action is needed.** And action is needed from all those who have something to share. The Millennium Development Goals are a call for action at several levels and Portugal is committed to give its contribution to achieve such goals. Post 2015 is not in the future. It is **NOW**.
- (2) **The need to preserve the scientific *acquis*.** Portugal has a long tradition of scientific tropical knowledge in what comes to agriculture and forestry. That knowledge, which for centuries has



been cherished by researchers, must find its way in the contemporary world, creating jobs and serving people.

(3) **The need to answer emerging challenges**, such as food safety and nutrition, food security, sustainable resources management and climate change.

And HOW does it work?

In a world where resources are scarce, SKAN is, above all, a WEB PLATFORM, focussing on communication, a social network and a channel for sharing digital contents and information.

By promoting international projects in agriculture, SKAN positions itself as a **multi-stakeholder forum**, in line with new realities, evolving global priorities and promoting **PRODUCTION and SUSTAINABILITY**.

We are working very closely with the FAO's office in Lisbon and its representative from whom we have received support and encouragement.

Dear Director General, Dear Ministers,,

By nature, I am an optimistic person. For me, the question about the glass being half full or half empty is pointless. For me, the glass is always full – half with water, half with air. Let's take it in our hands and move forward.

Thank you.