

High Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy

CSOs/NGOs Forum

Tuesday 3 June, FAO

Chair's Summary

The Forum was introduced by Yasuo Endo, Director, FAO Strategic Planning Unit, Office of the Director-General and was chaired by Ms Barbara Stocking, OXFAM.

The primary objective of the Forum was to provide a space at the High Level Conference (HLC) for farmers, their representatives and non-governmental organizations to give voice to their analyses and concerns on the current food security crisis. Over 150 people were present, including representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Government delegations, UN and other development agencies and the press.

The panellists (mainly farmers) and participants' interventions touched upon the following:

- The Forum's main consensus was that the voices, concerns, priorities, preferences analyses and recommendations of farmers and other rural peoples must be given a more prominent role/place in the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies, and programmes responding to the current and future food security crises. This includes especially small scale farmers, fisher folks, forest dwelling peoples, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, and above all, women, all of whose voices are not presently well represented in the current discourse and negotiations. The current situation was described as a human rights crisis, as well as an economic, nutritional and ecological crisis. Efforts to respond to the crisis by all stakeholders will benefit from applying perspectives of the human Right to Food.
- The ecological and technological dimensions of the current crisis were mentioned by every speaker. Nearly all speakers felt that the predominant production paradigm is unsustainable; most felt that locally adapted, domestically oriented, small-scale ecological approaches had been seriously undervalued and should play a much larger role in all initiatives for action especially in the face of climate change. Alternatives to chemical-intensive, global market-oriented farming should receive more attention from policy makers, researchers, and intervention programmes. National policies that would give operating space to strengthen locally adapted farming systems, including regulations, should be supported.
- All speakers reaffirmed that food production should be given the highest priority by all stakeholders. In that context, nearly all speakers emphasized that the diversion of production to bioenergy crops should in every case be handled with caution.

- Most speakers expressed serious concern about the relatively weaker participation of CSOs/ NGOs in the processes of the Summit. The importance of carrying the messages of the Forum to the parties negotiating the Declaration and the Committee of the Whole of the High-Level Conference, and of following up with national action, was stressed by most speakers. Several options were discussed.

The spirit of the Forum was positive, constructive, at times passionate, and above all, purposeful.