

## Speech at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security

**SUN Zhengcai**  
Minister of Agriculture  
People's Republic of China

Rome, June 2008

Distinguished Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to attend the High-Level Conference on World Food Security on behalf of the Chinese Government.

The recent surge of international food prices has gradually evolved into a food crisis affecting many countries in the world. This is the result of a combination of multiple factors. The continuous sharp rise of international oil prices, the general increase of production costs, the rapid growth of bio-energy, the rising demand for food, reduced production caused by natural disasters and the manipulation of speculative capitals: all these factors have a direct bearing on the fundamentals of food demand and supply and have driven food prices even higher. In view of the current critical realities, we must re-scrutinize and reflect on the issues of food and agriculture. I hold that:

**Food security remains the primary issue facing the survival and development of human beings.** 'Food security for all' is a fundamental human right in modern societies. The continuous growth of global demand for food is an irreversible trend in a pretty long time to come. Eradication of hunger and malnutrition, proper increase of food consumption levels and steady improvement of living standards is not only a common wish and justified right of the people in the developing world, but also a main indicator of the world's development and progress. The current world food security situation leaves no room for complacency and there is still a long and arduous way to go before achieving the goals of the World Food Summit and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

**Developing countries are the vulnerable link in world food security.** Developing countries are low in resilience and most vulnerable to food crisis. There are still 820 million undernourished people in the developing world. The surge of food prices has caused them great sufferings and could lead to further social riot and political unrest,

putting the permanent peace and common prosperity at risk. Therefore, we shall put the food security in developing countries into the first place when we address issues of world food security.

**The safeguard of world food security is facing more non-traditional challenges and increasingly complicated situation.** Apart from traditional constraints including population growth, land and water shortage and input insufficiency, we are facing many non-traditional challenges as well, such as the development of bio-energy and global climate change. In order to improve the global food security, we should not only increase production but also actively seek solutions of related issues in other fields; we should not only strengthen domestic agriculture but also intensify international cooperation; we should not only adopt effective measures based on the current situation but also make unremitting efforts with long-term perspectives.

**The impact of producing grain-based bio-fuels on food security cannot be overlooked.** The basic function of agriculture is to satisfy food demand for human survival and development. The production of grain-based bio-fuels has driven up grain utilization, exacerbated the already tight food supply and demand balance, with potentials to trigger off more and far-reaching problems. We shall take a coordinated approach to address issues of food security and energy security.

**Climate change will pose a long-term challenge to food security.** Agricultural production and food security is most prone to the adverse effects of climate change. Rising temperature and increased occurrences of extreme events brought by climate change will damage the eco-system, leading to increased outbreaks of animal and plant pests and diseases, adding uncertainties to agricultural production and resulting in fluctuations of food production. Developing countries are facing more difficulties in dealing with climate change.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a big developing country with 1.3 billion people, China has always paid great attention to food and agricultural development. During 2004-2007, food production has increased for four consecutive years and the total grain output last year exceeded 500 million tons. This year, China's agriculture has prevailed over disasters of snow and ice storms and the extremely severe earthquake, and our summer grains and oilseeds are set to harvest good crops. Grain reserves are currently abundant, supply of major farm products ample and food prices largely stable. China has managed with success to feed 1.3 billion people, mostly relying on domestic production, which in itself is a major contribution to the world food security. China has maintained normal import and export trade of grain and has gained a position as a net cereal exporter. In 2007, China's net cereal exports recorded 8.354 million tons, up 2.3 times over the previous year. Net cereal exports have reached 505,000 tons in the first quarter of 2008.

Chinese government will continue to adhere to the food security policy of basic self-sufficiency complemented by imports and exports to readjust surplus and shortfalls. We will continue to increase agricultural inputs and to strictly protect farmland and other agricultural resources; we will continue to reinforce irrigation and water conservancy facilities, to promote agricultural science and technology advancement and to boost farmers' initiatives to produce food. China has full confidence and capability to achieve long-term food security mostly based on domestic production.

We will persist in the bio-energy development approach with Chinese characteristics. We will adhere to the principle of 'no competition for grains with people and no competition for land with grains', putting stringent control over the production of bio-fuels using feedstock such as maize and oilseeds while at the same time promoting bio-fuel production using crop straws and stalks or by way of proper expansion of energy crops. We will promote rural biogas and the gasification and solidification of straws and stalks making full use of agricultural and rural wastes such as straws, stalks, animal and poultry droppings, as an alternative of fossil fuels. By the end of 2007, biogas has reached 26.5 million rural households nationwide, with a total production of biogas of 10.2 billion cubic meters, translating to the substitution of 16 million tons of standard coal and the reduction of over 44 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. This has been proved to be an economical and convenient bio-energy with great potentials.

Chinese government attaches great importance to the issue of climate change and persists in sustainable development. Environmental protection has been listed in our basic national policy and the scientific outlook on development has been established as our concept of good governance. We devote major efforts to advancing energy efficiency and consumption reduction and have declared the explicit goal of reducing the energy consumption per unit of GDP by 20% from 2005 to 2010. We will make readjustments to the structure and production pattern of agriculture, forestry, animal farming and fisheries, promote improved seeds and breeds and advanced practical technologies, improve the efficiency of resource utilization and step up control on animal and plant pests and diseases, enhance the capacity of climate change adaptation and sustainable development in the field of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries.

China is committed to contributing to the development of the world food and agriculture. On the one hand, China actively makes contributions and donations, within the limits of its capacity, to international food and agriculture agencies and provides food assistance to countries with food emergencies. On the other hand, China is taking advantage of its agricultural expertise such as hybrid rice to assist other developing countries to increase agricultural and food production. China has established or is establishing over 20 demonstration centers of agricultural technology

in some countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We have dispatched nearly 1,000 agricultural experts and technicians to other developing countries, for which we have trained a large number of technicians. The Chinese Government appreciates the efforts made by FAO and the international community to improve world food security and will continue to intensify the exchange and cooperation with other countries in the field of food and agriculture and respond positively to recommendations of this High-Level Conference in addressing food price rise and climate change. We will further strengthen the South-South Cooperation in the framework of FAO's Special Program for Food Security and will make continuous efforts on regional agricultural cooperation, implementing the commitments made in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and supporting other developing countries to increase food and agricultural production.

Mr. Chairperson, it is neither true nor constructive attributing the growing food demand worldwide to the growth of developing countries or to specific policies of some countries. Upon concerted policies and efforts by all countries, we have the full capability to jointly promote and safeguard world food security. For this purpose, I would wish to put forward five recommendations:

**First**, more attention should be paid to food security by all countries in the world and agriculture be bestowed a more prominent position. Major grain producing countries shall redouble their efforts while developing countries shall adopt effective policy measures to boost inputs in food production and agriculture, to reinforce agricultural infrastructure, to strengthen research, development and extension of agricultural technologies, to support farmers to increase production and to raise food self-sufficiency.

**Secondly**, efforts shall be made to intensify international cooperation in food and agriculture at all levels. The international community should take immediate and concerted actions to increase food assistance and to effectively respond to food emergencies. International organizations and the developed countries should take more concrete actions to provide the developing countries with technical, financial and input support and help them raise food and agricultural productivities and ensure food security. Efforts should be made to intensify monitoring and early warning programs on world food security and to strengthen the South-South Cooperation under the Special Program for Food Security.

**Thirdly**, scientific guidance shall be given to the development of the bio-energy sector. International cooperation mechanisms should be developed to review and re-assess the long-term impact of bio-energy and to formulate policy guidelines. With food security as the top priority, research and development and technical cooperation should be intensified and focused on new breakthroughs in the integrated utilization of agricultural wastes, including straws and stalks.

**Fourthly**, international cooperation responding to climate change shall be enhanced. Developed countries shall stringently fulfill their obligations in emission reduction and step up technical transfer to help developing countries improve their climate change adaptation capacity in the spirit of partnership for common development. Developing countries shall take into consideration of both short-run and long-term perspectives to formulate and carry out effective measures, increase efficiency of resource utilization, select the most suitable seeds and breeds, improve regional distribution and practices of agriculture and reduce potential losses from climate change.

**Fifthly**, efforts shall be made to improve food trade and achieve win-win solution through cooperation. We shall renew our efforts to further improve the environment and establish a fair and equitable order for international agricultural trade and protect the initiatives of farmers for production in developing countries. All countries, especially developed countries shall, with the greatest sincerity, expedite the process of the Doha Round negotiations.

Finally, I would wish to take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the individuals, organizations, governments and international community for your concern and support in China's Wenchuan earthquake relief.