

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT

FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The
Challenge of Climate Change and Bioenergy

Delivered by Hon Jim Anderton, Minister of Agriculture,
Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates.

I don't want to repeat what has already been said about the causes of the current food security situation.

It doesn't bring us any closer to solutions to point the finger at one another or apportion blame. Instead I want to focus on the solutions.

The causes of global food insecurity are many, complex and interconnected. Therefore our response must be multi-pronged, comprehensive and integrated.

Clearly, the first need is to maintain food supplies to those who at this moment are suffering the most.

I am pleased to announce that New Zealand will immediately give a further seven million New Zealand dollars to the World Food Programme appeal. The strong

international response to the appeal will hopefully allow the World Food Programme to meet its existing commitments over the year ahead.

But food aid reaches only a portion of those in need and is not an enduring solution.

We must also dramatically scale up investments in agricultural development and social protection mechanisms to address the needs of those facing chronic and structural hunger. The challenge of producing fifty per cent more food by 2030 is immense and can only be achieved through a new revolution in agricultural investment and research.

The world's focus on manufacturing and services over the last decade has seen too little attention given to the basic necessities of life.

Last month the New Zealand government allocated \$700m to new research and development in food production to be spent over the next decade. As a country that exports the overwhelming majority of its food this is an investment in helping feed the world and in solving many of the

sustainability challenges of agriculture faced the world over.

New Zealand is also pledging today \$2.5 million of additional funding to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.

But just producing more is not the full solution either, we also need to get food produced by, and delivered to, the people who need it most. The situation demands that we make genuine progress in reducing market distortions in agriculture and in providing fairer trading opportunities for developing countries.

Export restrictions which lower supply on international markets are counter-productive and add to supply problems. By contrast, lowering import tariffs is more likely to increase supply and lower domestic prices. We need to get the right signals to those farmers who can make a difference.

When New Zealand abolished subsidies and tariffs in the 1980s we underwent changes in our rural landscape but you won't find a farmer in New Zealand today who would go back to the tariffs and subsidies of the past. Reform

spurred significant innovation and productivity gains, which has meant we produce more food than ever before.

With others, New Zealand urges a successful and rapid conclusion to the Doha Round. This will require concessions and compromises that can only be delivered through courageous political leadership.

There can be no doubt that climate change poses significant risks to long-term food production. Lack of action now, in reducing emissions will create hunger in the future.

But we must accept that even drastic reductions in greenhouse gases will not prevent some climate change. So we must do more to ensure effective and timely adaptation and disaster risk responses.

A critical part of New Zealand's response to climate change is in research to reduce emissions from agriculture. We have already established an international collaborative initiative called the Livestock Emissions and Abatement Research Network and welcome further expressions of interest to join and invest in this growing network.

New Zealand also recognises that biofuels are an important element of climate change, energy security and environmental sustainability policies. There is a need to strengthen our understanding of the full environmental and food security implications of different biofuel options. New Zealand is investing to expedite the development of second generation biofuels, particularly in wood waste to ethanol, and we welcome partnership with others on this.

In our urgency to respond to today's problems we must not lose sight of sustainable resource management. High food prices may place further pressure on those resources critical to food and agriculture, including soils, water, forests and vulnerable fish stocks. It is vital that sustainable management principles are strengthened and not undermined through a short term drive to increase production.

We cannot continue to fool ourselves that the Earth's resources are limitless and that global consumption can continue to grow unchecked for the current global population, let alone that of billions more people.

So in the developing world education, family planning and opportunity for women must become priorities. And in the developed world, lifestyles must also change, to reduce consumption and become more sustainable.

We are coming to understand that our actions on a small and finite planet connect us with everyone else. When we consume more than we need in one part of the planet it affects the ability of others to meet their own needs. This realisation has profound consequences for how we organise and cooperate in our common humanity.

Chair

What each country does domestically is vitally important, but even more important is what we do together. The current situation and outlook calls for unprecedented international leadership, coordination, and cooperation at multilateral and regional levels.

The work of the UN Secretary-General's Task Force has begun this, but the track record of multilateral coherence and coordination in agriculture and food is not strong. Too many agencies and programmes operate in a vertical and parallel manner. As we seek to dramatically scale up

support to agriculture there is no room for duplication or gaps.

We need clear roles and divisions of labour and high level pooling of funds which allow the most appropriate mix of responses and agencies.

We don't need to reinvent the principles for improved collaboration. We have principles underlying the UN 'Delivering as One' Initiative, and the Principles of the Paris Aid Effectiveness Declaration – we need only implement them.

This is our duty to those who are not present at this conference, those who will go hungry tonight because neither national, nor international responses reach them effectively.

The FAO has an important role to play. To meet the challenges ahead, the Organisation must take the opportunity offered by the Independent External Evaluation to revitalise itself. A comprehensive response, by Members and by management is called for this year.

Each of the responses I have outlined will take considerable political courage and commitment. As the Director General has already noted, the question is less one of money than it is of priorities.

Our responsibility, as leaders of our peoples, is to be strong enough and to care enough to put aside political expediency, and thus provide the leadership required to work together as one people on one planet.

Thank you for your attention.