



STATEMENT OF MS SHARON DIJKSMA
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE OF THE NETHERLANDS

On 19 November 2014

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NETHERLANDS – SHARON DIJKSMA

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Gandhi said over one hundred years ago: *“Our salvation can only come through the farmer.”* Today, this is truer than ever. In the last two decades it were primarily the farmers who have made a significant contribution to reducing hunger and enhancing food security.

The number of hungry people has declined by over 200 million, and the prevalence of undernourishment has fallen from 18.7 to 11.3 percent globally. The hunger reduction target of the Millennium Development Goals is within reach.

Yet, with many millions still going to bed hungry each night, and many more dying of malnutrition, we cannot afford to sit back. And we must not place responsibility solely on farmers.

As Kofi Annan said: *“Farmers have the enthusiasm but need the necessary support from the government.”* Yes, farmers must be in the driving seat, but we in government must be the ones who put them behind the wheel.

In the Netherlands we have a long tradition of public private partnerships. Our agribusiness industry cooperates with the

public sector to generate sustainable growth in agricultural productivity, and boost the nutritional value of our food. In recent years we have also applied this approach to improve food security around the globe. Increasingly, we strive to combine aid and trade: bringing together social and environmental needs with economic opportunities.

For instance, we are working with the biggest dairy cooperative in the Netherlands to create sustainable value chains for dairy in Vietnam and Indonesia. We train farmers in animal health, milking methods, hygiene and breeding programmes. These investments will lead to better food safety, higher quality and increased productivity. And let's not forget, this will result in greater profits for all involved.

The same is true for initiatives such as Access to Seeds, which provides farmers all over the world with high quality seeds adapted to local circumstances. At the same time, Dutch businesses and NGOs use their expertise to help set up targeted campaigns, provide health education and promote local supply chains.

Our aim is not only to double productivity and improve quality, but also to do this using half the inputs we do now. This isn't just a goal, it's a necessity, as we only have one earth, and its resources are finite.

We have to support farmers and agribusiness in implementing climate smart agriculture. We must fulfil our threefold pledge to increase food production, enhance resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse emissions.

The Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture was launched at the UN Climate Summit in September this year. More than 75 partners from government, the private sector, academia and civil society have already joined this international alliance.

This January in Grenada we will present a similar alliance in the area of sustainable fisheries. A Voluntary Global Network for Action on Blue Growth and Food Security will create and accelerate new actions and partnerships in this area.

Another priority is reducing food losses and waste. In developing countries almost 30 percent of fresh produce is spoiled before it reaches the consumer. Developed countries must also respond to this challenge: 30 percent of our food is wasted by consumers, retailers and the hospitality sector. To address this pressing issue, an international conference on food waste will be held in June 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Director General of the FAO said some time ago: “*The quest for food security can be the common thread that links the different challenges we face and helps build a sustainable future.*” At a time when the threat of war, terrorism and deadly epidemics such as Ebola are more real than ever, we cannot afford to underestimate the importance of our agreements on nutrition and food security.

So let's make sure the path we take is fair, practical and sustainable. A path leading from food security and filled stomachs to economic growth, jobs and political stability. It is a path that goes via farmers, and one we must all take, together.

Thank you.