

Check against delivery

Second International Conference on Nutrition

Statement by Kanayo F. Nwanze
President
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

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Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Given the staggering costs of hunger and under nutrition in human and economic terms, it is inspiring to see all of us gathered here today on such an important issue. Indeed, since the first ICN in 1992, in 2014 we can genuinely say that there is stronger country commitment on nutrition along with greater international attention.
2. But although a bowl of rice may fill the belly, it can still leave a child malnourished. In the same way, without investment to back up all of our words, the Rome Declaration on Nutrition may appear ambitious, but will be empty of any real substance; it will join the ranks of dozens of declarations, commitments and pledges. Worth only the paper they are written on.

3. We all know the global figures: 805 million people lack enough food to meet their nutritional needs; and 45 per cent of child deaths annually are due to malnutrition. But these generalities can overshadow complexities and nuances.
4. One thing is clear: food may be the foundation for good nutrition, but it is only one of several necessary ingredients. Nutritional outcomes are affected by numerous elements including education, access to health services, a clean environment, and women's empowerment. This is one reason why attention to rural development is so important.
5. Within this big picture, smallholders and family farms have a huge role to play. The world's 500 million small farms are responsible for about 80 per cent of food production in developing countries. They play a crucial role in ensuring

that diverse, nutritious foods are available to rural and urban dwellers of all ages.

6. But one of life's most tragic ironies is that the very people who work so hard to feed their nations are too often the ones who are poor and hungry.
7. The statistics are clear. About half of those living in hunger live in rural smallholder farming communities. Twenty per cent are landless and depend on agriculture for survival. A further 10 per cent depend on herding, fishing and forest resources. Only 20 per cent of the world's hungriest people live in cities.
8. That is why any investments to improve worldwide nutrition must focus on rural farm families and must recognize the tremendous potential of smallholders. By strengthening their role in food supply systems we are also

strengthening employment opportunities in rural communities, and the sustainable management of natural resources, including the protection of biodiversity. We need to invest in their capacity to produce more, and to produce better. These small farms are at the centre of rural transformation.

9. IFAD can play a unique role to support this goal.

10. In 2013, we began to scale-up our focus on nutrition. To that end, we have been consolidating everything we've learned about nutrition, food security, gender, and agriculture and rural development.

11. Raising incomes through enhanced production and productivity allows smallholders to buy the food they can't grow. But increasing farmer incomes is only part of the puzzle.

12. A focus on nutrition also means investing in better production, processing and storage to enhance nutrient values.
13. It means introducing more nutritious and more diverse crops. And it means promoting better knowledge and behaviour so that changes in farm production result in changes in diet at the household level.
14. According to IFPRI, reaching more than 80% of the world's undernourished children with key nutrition interventions over the next 15 years may require as much as US\$10 billion a year. It would be far cheaper to make sure that all children had access to balanced, diversified and nutritious food right from the start. We should therefore recognize that nutrition is more than a health issue.
15. The experience shows that agriculture-led strategies contribute directly to reducing hunger

and under-nutrition. In agriculture-based economies, such as China and Viet Nam – where smallholders predominate – growth strategies focused on smallholders may do the most to reduce poverty and hunger. Between 1990 and 2013, China reduced under nutrition from 22.9 per cent to 11.4 per cent. Child stunting was reduced from 32.3 per cent to 9.4 per cent in the same period.

16. When we address nutrition, we must not overlook the importance of women. There is compelling evidence that the nutrition status of children improves when women are educated, healthy and well nourished. And -- this is important -- when women have the power to make autonomous decisions.

17. More than half of the reduction in malnutrition between 1970 and 1995 is attributable to improvements in women's status and education. Empowering and educating

women must be a principal goal of agricultural development.

18. And more needs to be done to support biodiversity in farming systems.
19. There are more than 50,000 edible plants in the world, but studies show that rice, maize and wheat provide 60 per cent of the world's energy intake. Several indigenous crops are known to be more nutritious than the ones we eat today, while fruits and vegetables provide micronutrients that are vital for good health.
20. Of course, all this is not enough either. If we do not come forth with investments and policy actions, our words today will simply disguise our failure to act.
21. IFAD does not have all the answers. On the contrary. We know that lasting solutions to

malnutrition lie in building partnerships between and among the UN and other development agencies, governments, NGOs and CSOs, the private sector, researchers and smallholders themselves.

22. And while we are pleased to endorse the Rome Declaration on Nutrition, and the framework for action, endorsement from IFAD, or anyone else, is just a beginning.

23. That is why I hope that this will be the last ICN where we meet to discuss what needs to be done. We already know what is required. And so, when we next meet, let it be not to make another declaration. Let it be to celebrate success and be able to say, "Yes, we did it!".

24. Thank you.