

International Conference on Nutrition – FAO, 19-21 November 2014

World Farmers' Organisation – Private Sector

Thank you Mr/Mme Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to speak to you today on behalf of the Private Sector and in particular on behalf of the World Farmers' Organisation.

The Farmers' constituency appreciates very much the opportunity to participate in this Second International Conference on Nutrition and is particularly thankful to the numerous Government representatives who in their statements have underlined the centrality of farmers' role in tackling malnutrition at local, national and global levels.

When we look at public health and the critical importance of nutrition factor in relation to it, we cannot fail to consider the special mandate farmers have vis a vis these important aspects. Farmers are the ones who produce high quality food for the whole humanity on a daily basis, by sowing the best products in the most sustainable manner.

Due to their close relationship with the land, farmers have an inner knowledge of the agricultural products, including crops, fishery, dairy and forestry, their features and their nutrition factors. Farmers, better than anybody else are able to select and produce the best food of the best quality, according to the season, the climate and the geographical origin of the products.

For these reasons if we really want to improve the global public health, we need to invest on farmers.

According to the United Nations Permanent Committee for Food (SCN), malnutrition is the biggest cause of illness in the world. Malnutrition, ranging from obesity in some countries to a lack of nutrients in others, in situations where people are dying of hunger, it is a global problem with real costs.

The report estimates that 2 billion people are deficient in micronutrients while 1.4 billion are overweight, of which 500 million are obese, and all this comes with a cost of about \$ 3.5 trillion a year.

There are two sides to address malnutrition and its impact on public health:

- 1) to support the quality and amount of food a person eats; and
- 2) to ensure adequate health care and a healthy environment.

Increase food production is very important, however, it must be done in conjunction with public health interventions and improved nutrition education for all.

In our opinion, it is impossible to find the proper solution without the support and experience of farmers. The direct involvement of farmers in the International Conference on Nutrition, as well as in the broader global policy dialogue on Food and Nutrition Security, is key to success. Despite the centrality of farmers in implementing successful solutions for tackling food insecurity and malnutrition, farmers are not always given the opportunity to be represented in global policy fora on agriculture. Farmers, with their experience and knowledge of nutritional factors and healthy diets can support Governments, International Organizations and all stakeholders in the fight against

malnutrition.

Farmers are keen to support and contribute to this battle at many levels. At policy level as said, but also in the implementation of specific action-oriented initiatives at local and national levels. Farmers, as well as, the whole private sector believe in partnership! We are strongly convinced that it is essential for all stakeholders to work together and develop a global food system that improves people's nutrition in a sustainable way.

Thank you.