

**PRIVATE SECTOR MECHANISM
PLENARY COMMENTS
2014 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN2)
NOVEMBER 21, 2014
ROME, ITALY
by
Dave Crean, Global Vice President, Corporate Research and Development, Mars
Incorporated.**

INTRODUCTION

I am honored to represent the Private Sector Mechanism of the UN Committee on Food Security to discuss how business can collaborate as an equal partner in helping to eliminate hunger and malnutrition.

The activities and the influences of the private sector can be seen across the entire food supply chain—from farm to fork. Food industry representatives are uniquely placed to identify and help address the full complexity of food issues. Our initiatives can help drive sustained, positive change to the lives of the people and the communities we impact across the world.

So today, we urge the ICN2 to support businesses, partnerships and new initiatives to drive even greater positive changes that can help hundreds of millions of people.

Specifically, we urge the ICN2 to ask food businesses and other stakeholders to:

1. Increase sustainable agriculture production by all farmers, especially small holder farmers, entrepreneurs, and small and medium enterprises;
2. Provide access to safe, nutritious, affordable, and diverse diets that promote healthy outcomes;
3. Support purpose-driven nutrition interventions, for vulnerable populations, especially adolescent girls, pregnant and breast feeding women and children in their first 1000 days;
4. Encourage activities that support nutrition, education, and other initiatives that both empower women and develop communities.

I would like to focus on food safety as one of the most significant and pervasive problems in sustainable development efforts. It is a preclusive barrier to the hypothesis that hunger and malnutrition can be eliminated by 2030.

There is overwhelming evidence linking food safety issues to economic and human development. The scale and pervasiveness of food safety problems are truly daunting. Here is some data:

- Even in the developed world food safety is a significant challenge. In the USA 1 in 6 of the population had food-related illnesses in 2011 causing 50 million illnesses, 3000 deaths and costing \$80 billion. In Africa 2000 people each day die from food safety related illnesses;
- 25% of staple food crops are contaminated by fungal toxins, including Aflatoxin. Exposure to Aflatoxin in the short term can cause death; longer term it can cause liver cancers, and it is strongly associated with stunting;
- Economically it costs Africa between 450 and 670 million USD annually in lost exports to the EU alone simply by failing to meet export standards;
- 4.5 billion people are exposed to Aflatoxin-contaminated foods annually.

The causes of these failures are complex but industry experience and learning can be applied to mitigate and help manage many of these issues. Often businesses have the tools, capabilities and the expertise to impact food safety and therefore food security solutions. Not only are we well placed to help raise the standard on food safety globally, but we have a responsibility to collaborate with regulators, researchers, and NGOs to make it happen. By using these collaborations we can ensure that food safety is recognized as a basic human right.

Food security exists when: “all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food”. It is clear that food security cannot be achieved without food safety.

OUR ASK

It is clear that ensuring safe food is one of the biggest public health challenges of our time that requires collaboration between companies, countries and agencies.

We ask the ICN2 to shout loud and clear for leadership, commitments and collaborations:

1. **Leadership** by the UN agencies and organizations to convene, facilitate and stimulate appropriate initiatives and provide needed resources;
2. **Commitments** by national governments to create a positive enabling environment, eliminate the negative barriers to action, and provide needed resources; and
3. **Collaborations** and partnerships across the private sector, research organizations, foundations and other stakeholders to utilize their capabilities, technical expertise, and provide needed resources for implementation.

We welcome the continued leadership of ICN2 members and all future collaborative efforts in support of our mutual goal of the elimination of global poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

Thank you.