

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ORDINARY AND
EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCES OF THE
PARTIES TO THE BASEL, ROTTERDAM AND STOCKHOLM
CONVENTIONS**

**ADDRESS BY JOSÉ GRAZIANO DA SILVA, FAO DIRECTOR-
GENERAL**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 9 MAY 2013

Madame Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor of Switzerland,

Honorable Ministers,

Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive-Director of the United Nations Environmental Programme,

Madame Naoko Ishii, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility,

Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today.

As you know, FAO's mandate is to help eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

When FAO was created after World War Two, the main cause of hunger was insufficient food production. Back then, the first and only priority was to increase production.

We were able to overcome that challenge, increasing food production and per capita food availability by 40 percent.

In the 1960's and seventies, the Green Revolution saved an estimated one billion people from starvation.

Chemical inputs were part of that success.

But we have paid a price for this in our soil, in our water, in the stockpiles of obsolete pesticides abandoned around the world and in the health of farmers.

In 2012, worldwide sales of pesticides were almost 50 billion dollars. And yet, only a fraction of applied pesticides actually reach the pests they are intended to target.

The rest ends up as contamination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's agriculture needs to be different from that of the past.

To fight hunger and eradicate poverty we will need to find more sustainable ways to produce 60 percent more food by 2050.

The quest for sustainability is now central to FAO's newly redefined Strategic Objectives.

We work with countries, farmers and other organizations to promote sustainable food systems and employment in a number of ways:

We help cut down the amount of food that is lost and wasted in production, marketing and consumption. This way, we can feed the world without the need to increase the production by 60 percent.

We promote the *Save and Grow* approach to producing "more with less," while building healthy ecosystems.

We use Integrated Pest Management to reduce dependence on pesticides and increase the use of natural alternatives.

We help share knowledge and sustainable practices through Farmer Field Schools.

However, in much of the world, chemical pesticides will continue to be part of farming.

The challenge is to enable countries to manage pesticides safely, to use the right quantity, at the right time and in the right way, and also to apply alternatives to hazardous pesticides.

Because when we don't, pesticides continue to pose a serious risk to human health and the environment and will eventually end up as waste. Today, half a million tons of obsolete pesticides are scattered around the developing world.

Around 70 percent of the chemicals addressed by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions are pesticides, and many are used in agriculture. It is in the best interest of all countries to ensure that the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions can work together, effectively and efficiently, to address various aspects of the chemical life cycle.

As many of you know, FAO shares the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – a good example of synergies – and FAO is strongly committed to support the implementation of not only the Rotterdam but all 3 Conventions.

Ladies and gentlemen, since 1994, through its Program on the Prevention and Disposal of Obsolete Pesticides, FAO has been committed to compiling data on the numbers and types of chemicals in the stocks, and the reasons for their accumulation. Over the years, our pesticide risk reduction programme has supported activities in more than 90 countries.

Also, FAO developed and has supported implementation of the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides.

I am happy to note that this voluntary Code is being revised for the first time in a decade. This revision will strengthen its reference to the Rotterdam Convention and its language on highly hazardous pesticides.

The proposed revision has been carried out with input from UNEP and the World Health Organization, and will be presented to the FAO Conference for endorsement in June.

FAO looks forward to helping countries make use of the voluntary Code, and to meet the requirements of the three, legally-binding Conventions.

Ladies and gentlemen, our experience has taught us something very important: governance mechanisms, conventions and codes are only as good as the effort to put them in practice.

Countries, institutions, communities, and companies, must all be fully involved in the challenging, day-to-day work of keeping people, land and water productive and safe.

Many of you are working hard to put the management of chemicals, pesticides and wastes higher on your political agendas, and to back up that commitment with consistent action.

I urge Ministries of Agriculture, the Environment, and other sectors to keep up the momentum, to cooperate and communicate with each other at the national, regional and global levels.

I know that together we can improve livelihoods, protect lives, and build the future we want. A sustainable future, without hunger and without poverty! I thank you all for being here.