

**FAO SIDE EVENT TO THE
ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE
CONFERENCES OF THE PARTIES TO THE BASEL,
ROTTERDAM AND STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS
“SUSTAINABLE SYNERGIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE”
OPENING ADDRESS BY JOSÈ GRAZIANO DA SILVA, FAO
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 9 MAY 2013**

I want to welcome you all on this side event and want to give a special thanks to our guest presenters.

As you might know, FAO is currently in a process of reviewing its strategic framework.

We are confident that our next Conference, that will happen in little over a month, will approve a program of work that focuses on eradicating hunger and reducing rural poverty by increasing sustainable food production, making food systems more inclusive and efficient, and increasing the resilience of people's livelihoods.

Sustainable agriculture is a key to all this.

As I said earlier today at the opening of the high-level segment, estimates point to the need to increase agricultural output by 60% until 2050.

In the past we were able to meet the challenge of significantly raising food production by using input intensive farming methods.

But, today, this approach is simply not sustainable because of its toll on the environment.

Our challenge is to increase food production while keeping our food, land and water safe for the present generation and generations to come.

For the population as a whole, and farmers in developing countries in particular.

Seventy percent of the world's undernourished live in rural areas in developing countries.

Millions of them depend directly on agriculture for food and employment, including 500 million smallholder farmers.

Naturally, farmers look for effective ways to protect their crops. This is why many choose to use chemical pesticides.

Many of the pesticides used in developing countries by the most vulnerable communities are in the 'most hazardous' categories. And not always the farmers have the training they need to use them correctly.

I am especially concerned that children, and women of childbearing age, are among those who use, or who are exposed to, these toxic pesticides.

Around 70 percent of the chemicals addressed by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions are pesticides.

Most of them are used in agriculture and extensively used in developing countries.

FAO recognizes that in order to keep agriculture sustainable the world must step up its efforts to change the ways in which chemical pesticides are produced, transported, used and discarded.

FAO has been working on this since the early 1960s.

We negotiated the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides in 1985.

The Code is a voluntary framework life-cycle management of pesticides that is widely accepted by governments, the private sector and civil society.

Together with the World Health Organization (WHO), FAO also sets standards for pesticide quality and residues in food.

FAO's worldwide network also offers direct support to regions and countries in managing pests and pesticides.

We are currently working in 60 countries, investing 65 dollars million in capacity development, disposal of obsolete pesticides, strengthening legislation and establishing sustainable ecologically based crop production and protection strategies.

But FAO does not work alone. No one can do this alone, without strong and effective partnerships.

We forge strategic and operational partnerships with our sister UN Agencies, with technical development agencies, with civil society, and with the private sector.

We rely on partners such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Japan, the United States and countries within the European Union.

They are among the generous donors who support a wide variety of projects to track and dispose of obsolete pesticides in Africa, Asia and the Near East.

They also help to implement the Conventions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Netherlands, for example, has funded our obsolete pesticides program since its beginning, as well as several national inventory and disposal programs.

And, right now, the EU is working with FAO on a \$7 million initiative to support 12 countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in managing massive stocks of obsolete pesticides.

Globally, many of these obsolete pesticides are listed by the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

Every day that they remain where they are, increases the risk of irreversible environmental contamination and human exposure.

Every action dealing with this type of waste must comply with the Basel Convention. FAO provides guidance to countries on how to do that.

We also work with countries to strengthen their regulatory and registration systems, to build up import controls and ensure that only legally-approved and quality pesticides reach the market.

Perhaps most importantly, FAO is helping farmers to develop more sustainable farming methods by using fewer pesticides and less hazardous tools, in keeping with its "Save and Grow" approach to agriculture.

We promote Integrated Pest Management systems with low-risk inputs like biopesticides and traps.

We work with farmers to look after natural resources such as soil, water and pollinators.

We know that well-adapted crops, grown in a healthy ecosystem, are less susceptible to damage from pests and diseases, so they need fewer pesticides.

At this event, you will hear much more about what is being done.

I thank you all for being here, and for sharing our vision to improve and protect lives.