

Report on the Side Event at the 24th session of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG)
“Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”
Iran Room – Tuesday 30 September 2014 – 1:00-2:30 pm

Panelists:

- Iain MacGillivray, Special Adviser to the President of IFAD
- John McHarris, Senior Programme Advisor, Policy, Programme and Innovation Division, WFP
- Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Director-General, Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, and FAO Lead on Post-2015
- Ambassador Mario Arvelo Caamaño, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to FAO, and Chairperson of COAG.
- Ambassador Laurence Argimon-Pistre, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Holy See, to the Order of Malta and to the UN Agencies in Rome.

Facilitator:

- Boubaker Ben-Belhassen, Deputy Director of the Trade and Markets Division (EST), FAO Focal Point for Post-2015

1. Opening remarks and introduction – Boubaker Ben-Belhassen

The meeting was opened by Mr. Ben-Belhassen, who welcomed all the participants and reminded them of the purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss the representation of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture in the Report of the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more generally in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. He provided a brief background on the Post-2015 process and the OWG on SDGs, whose Report will be the starting point for forthcoming discussions in the next and final phase of the process – intergovernmental negotiations. He then outlined the objectives of the event, which were, firstly, to present the outcome of the OWG Report and make an analysis of the proposed goals and targets; and secondly, to get a clearer picture of what will happen in the Post-2015 process from now until September 2015, when the agenda is supposed to be approved in a High-Level Summit. Finally, he made a reference to the richness of the RBA's collaboration over the past months, beginning in the stocktaking stage of the OWG in May 2013, and continuing into the deliberation through to the final Report in July.

2. Mr. Iain MacGillivray - IFAD's perspective

The first panelist to take the floor, Mr. MacGillivray outlined **IFAD's vision for rural transformation in Post-2015**, and highlighted some facts that are often overlooked. Three quarters of the poor live in rural areas, having the fewest assets and being most vulnerable. Opportunities however have never been greater in rural areas. Growth in rural areas can power sustainable development, inclusive growth, poverty eradication, gender equality, food security and nutrition. He stated that rural transformation was the best way for Post-2015 to achieve sustainable development and also outlined the key role of rural transformation in ending poverty and its relevance to all dimensions of the SDGs. He recalled the need for inclusive platforms for policy making, the governance of global public goods, sustainable energy, land tenure and for integrated approaches to natural resources management. He warned against underinvestment in rural areas explaining that ignoring smallholders would hinder efforts to eradicate poverty. He then outlined the need to enhance rural-urban linkages and to guarantee decent rural opportunities and incomes while enhancing resilience and productivity.

Furthermore, Mr. MacGillivray outlined **several strong points of the OWG Report**. Firstly, he stated that the Report covers a number of crucial areas already identified by the RBAs under Goal 2, including the importance of rural women, financial inclusion, people's access to and control of land and natural resources as well as access to different inputs, services and knowledge. He suggested that we are at a critical juncture in the preparation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, but since the formulation of the agenda is in the hands of UN Members, many questions boil down to political will. In concluding, he summarized that rural transformation is a key element across many issues (landscapes, people, social capital, nutrition and environment, equity, inclusiveness, sustainability) and that it may be necessary to make a course correction in policy processes, development practices as well as in public and private investments for pro-poor development.

Finally, Mr. MacGillivray announced that IFAD would be hosting a follow-up workshop with the RBAs in early November, in order to refine their common targets and indicators in the area of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

3. John McHarris - WFP's perspective on Hunger and Nutrition in the Post-2015 Agenda

Mr. McHarris focused on **WFP's perspective on hunger and nutrition** (Goal 2) and opened with a brief history of the organization. WFP, he said, was pleased to see two separate targets on food access and malnutrition under Goal 2, the general alignment of the targets with the Zero Hunger Challenge, as well as the fact that target 2.2 on nutrition not only incorporated, but also considerably expanded the World Health Assembly target by tackling all forms of malnutrition. WFP also welcomed the reference to children under target 2.1 on access, and to pregnant and lactating women under 2.2. WFP was particularly pleased that the quality technical work of the RBAs had been taken up by the OWG and looked forward to continue such productive collaboration through the Technical Support Team on goals, targets and indicators, outlining also how WFP had also worked with other partners such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and others.

He then recalled that the Zero Hunger Challenge fifth pillar on food loss and waste had not been associated to Goal 2 in the OWG Report, though food loss and waste were adequately addressed under 12.3 under Goal 12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production. At a general level, he explained that social safety nets and social protection systems comprised fundamental tools in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, and that the means of implementation presented an opportunity to better integrate social protection under Goal 2.

As the process moves forward, he mentioned that attention has to be paid not only to goals but also to **indicators**. In this regard, WFP looked forward to continued collaboration. He stated that the food consumption score is a useful and validated indicator for food access, as were certain indicators on food expenditures. He also reaffirmed WFP's commitment to all the indicators suggested by the RBA technical group.

4. Jomo Kwame Sundaram - FAO's perspective – Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources in the Post-2015 Agenda

Mr. Sundaram presented **FAO's perspective on Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**. He thanked the staff who had organized the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the crucial support of the Members. Delegates were playing a particularly important role in the Post-2015 process acting as an intermediary between Rome and their capitals, national ministries and New York. He recalled that the OWG Report had already been welcomed by the UN General Assembly and thanked the strong collaboration amongst the three RBAs which led to a robust final formulation of Goal 2, and also expressed his satisfaction for the strong reflection of FAO's perspectives throughout the OWG Report.

Mr. Sundaram also recalled that FAO had contributed to **different parallel work streams** to support Member States. For instance, FAO co-led the technical inputs for Goal 14 (marine

resources and oceans) and Goal 15 (ecosystems, biodiversity, forests, land/soils, mountains), and also contributed to Goals 1 (poverty), 5 (gender), 6 (water), 11 (human settlements) and 12 (sustainable consumption and production). He outlined that natural resources have become a central focus under the SDGs, particularly since the Rio+20 Conference where FAO had positioned the fundamental role of ecosystem services and natural resources use as part of important factors for improving livelihood of the people. Besides Goal 2, the aim of sustainably managing and efficiently using natural resources has now been embodied in target 12.2, and there are two Goals – 14 (oceans and marine resources) and 15 (ecosystems, biodiversity, forests, mountains, land/soils) - which deal exclusively with the management and use of natural resources.

Mr. Sundaram recognized that all these positive results are due in large part to the effective deployment of FAO's knowledge and technical expertise and the deep trust that Members have in the organization. At the same time, he wished to underscore some **important shortcomings** in the OWG Report. The formulation of target 2.5 (on biodiversity for food and agriculture) for instance created serious challenges in measurability. In an attempt to align with the Aichi Targets, the year 2020 is set as the achievement date for many of the targets under Goals 14 and 15 which caused confusion between other Goals and was often unrealistic. He then highlighted that there were many areas of sustainability for which data was limited and where data collection was prohibitively expensive, and hence further collaboration was needed to develop viable and credible indicators. In doing so, he suggested moderating the claims for a data revolution, as chief statisticians across the UN system have raised serious concern about such claims.

Moreover, Mr. Sundaram considered that, in the coming months, Member States were likely to focus on **three issues**: the consolidation of the existing goals and targets; the development of a reasonable number of indicators to support action on the agenda; and the discussion of international cooperation on means of implementation. He underscored that the consolidation of goals and targets carries with it opportunities and risks. Some countries wished to maintain the ambitiousness of a broad agenda as reflected in the OWG Report, while others would like to make it more manageable. If member states eventually opted for consolidation, there was a risk of key issues being diluted: mountains, seeds, animal breeds, ecosystem services and rural-urban linkages. He therefore called on all involved stakeholders to **continue to work together and intensify efforts** in the last phase of the Post-2015 process, in order to build a sustainable development agenda that will be coherent, implementable, measurable, and will tackle all the issues included in the OWG Report.

5. Ambassador Mario Arvelo Caamaño - G-77 perspective on the Post-2015 Development Agenda finalization and implementation

Ambassador Arvelo Caamaño provided some insights into **the G-77 perspective on the finalization and implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda**. In a **lively and provocative discourse**, he called upon Members to be even more ambitious on Goal 2 and to urgently set firm dates and appropriate accountability mechanisms to end hunger. He stated that there is a moral and political imperative to end hunger, but also an economic rationale, as transforming the hungry into empowered consumers and producers would spur growth and benefit everybody. He recalled that tens of thousands of people die of hunger and malnutrition every day, deploring the complacent silence of the international community and the media, and revered the Latin America and the Caribbean Zero Hunger Initiative, which aimed to end hunger by 2025.

He then switched focus to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and highlighted the disparities between developed and developing countries. For instance, SIDS do not have appropriate vessels or cutting-edge technology to harvest their national waters let alone in

international waters. Using the example of his own country, where over a third of the national income comes from tourism, he underlined the importance of balancing between the use and the conservation of natural resources, which is a challenge for most SIDS. He then quoted Goal 15 and the target on species' protection, recalling the example of how the EU's ban on importing certain animal products had been pivotal in curtailing poaching in developing countries. On Goal 17, he suggested that knowledge is the most powerful yet most unequal resource we have and that education is key to development, and urged FAO to continue working on this issue.

He concluded by exploring the difficulties in the **implementation** of the agenda, suggesting that the approach hitherto taken has been somewhat mistaken. Sustainable development would not take place through concessions granted by developed countries to developing countries, but by creating a favourable enabling environment the world over. In order for this holistic approach to take place, he asserted that developed country leaders must exercise a larger measure of political courage. In concluding, he emphasized the biggest revolution in history will take place the day we end hunger, so that hundreds of millions of hungry people become active consumers and producers.

6. Ambassador Laurence Argimon-Pistre - EU perspective on the Post-2015 Development Agenda finalization and implementation

Ambassador Argimon-Pistre presented the **EU perspective on the finalization and implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda**. She stated that the EU is moving towards achieving a common position, expected to be presented by the end of 2014, and that the Commission gives an enormous importance to Post-2015, not only because it will define the priorities of international cooperation for the next 15 years, but also because with the right framework, it will be possible for the world to eradicate poverty within a generation. The EU has been very active in the process and has participated in the OWG, while EU Commissioner Andris Piebalgs had also participated in the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Post-2015.

She suggested that, in the EU's perspective, the SDGs should have the **following three characteristics**: firstly, they should be global and applicable to all, covering all countries; secondly, they have to be rights-based and people-centered; and finally, they have to focus on poverty eradication while integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

She further underlined that the current OWG Report is broadly welcomed by the EU and is considered a very good basis for the final agenda: it covers all of the EU's priorities, especially regarding food security, nutrition and agriculture. She then stated that there is still an active debate in the EU on how the document should be addressed, and pointed to **some problematic issues**: the number of goals and targets is very large, and in the area of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture for instance, there are 12 targets that are directly relevant, 18 targets that are indirectly irrelevant, as well as 13 cross-cutting targets that are also related. While this reflected a comprehensive approach, it also risked leading to a lack of focus and diluted priorities. In addition, the OWG Report presents goals and targets as individual entities, which could lead to a silos approach, while instead it should be establishing interlinkages between different targets to facilitate integrated approaches to sustainable development.

Finally, Ambassador Argimon-Pistre called for more **work on the means of implementation, monitoring and accountability**, and revealed that the EU is currently working on a paper with suggestions to be ready by the end of the year. She suggested that the EU would be consulting the RBAs on issues related to food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture and counted on their continued collaboration in helping to define an EU approach to Goals 2, 14, 15, and 17.

7. Discussion

Following the presentations of the panelists, the floor was opened to the public for questions and comments.

Mr. Patrick Mink, Policy Advisor of the Federal Office of Agriculture of Switzerland, asked the RBAs whether they envisioned any joint gap analysis on the OWG report, and whether there was any space for Members to participate in the forthcoming RBA follow-up workshop on targets and indicators. Iain MacGillivray replied that a gap analysis could be considered in the forthcoming RBA workshop, and that IFAD would be keen to involve more actors in the further development of targets and indicators. John McHarris and Jomo Sundaram also replied, echoing IFAD's views.

A second intervention came from Mr. Neil Briscoe, Representative of the UK's Department for International Development, who asked Mr. Sundaram to elaborate on his reservations regarding the 'data revolution'. Mr. Sundaram explained that claims for a data revolution in recent years have raised some doubts in the minds of UN chief statisticians, and even though statisticians are often perceived as a conservative group, it was important to recognize the limits of any claims while keeping an open mind. In a sobering example, Mr. Sundaram recalled that a quarter of a million people had died of famine in Somalia in 2011, even though FAO's early warning system had issued 16 warnings over the preceding 12 months. On the one hand, this testified to the importance of timely and credible data, on the other hand though, it was evident that the failure had not been about data, but about inaction across the UN system. All in all, although there was evidently a need to pick up information quickly, there was an obligation to make credible and not excessive claims.

Following some more general questions from the audience, a final intervention was made by **Carlo Cafiero**, FAO Senior Statistician, who explained the merits of the newly launched 'Voices of the Hungry' project, a Food Insecurity Experience Scale-type indicator able to measure the severity of food insecurity in a credible and timely manner. He suggested that Food Insecurity Experience Scales had been successfully deployed in North and South America since 1995, and that FAO's project was close to defining a standard of comparable data across countries. The results from 20 countries have already been analyzed and the intention is to expand to 150 countries. He concluded praising the people-centered methodology and the inexpensiveness of the data needed for this indicator, which made it very attractive.

The moderator briefly summarized the outcomes of the discussion and closed the meeting thanking the audience for the active participation.