



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

World Summit on Food Security

Rome, 16 – 18 November 2009

Opening Statement of FAO Director-General, Dr Jacques Diouf

Your Excellency the President of the Senate of the Italian Republic,

Your Majesties,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

The President of the UN General Assembly,

The Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Dear Colleagues Heads of WFP and IFAD,

Honourable Heads of International and Regional Organizations,

The Mayor of Rome,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

One billion hungry people, that is one out of every group of six persons in the world, 105 million more than in 2008, five children dying every 30 seconds. Beyond the numbers, this means suffering for each of these human beings who is a loved child, mother, father, brother, sister, family relative, friend, neighbour.

This is our tragic achievement in these modern days when our technology allows us to travel to the moon and to space stations. It is sad to note that only when “food riots”, with deaths and injuries, broke out in 22 countries in all the continents during 2007 and 2008, threatening national government stability and global peace and security, that the issue of hunger became a serious concern. Unfortunately such interest seems to be waning as other issues are coming to the forefront of the international agenda, although all the heavy clouds that led to the previous crisis are again accumulating in the skies.

To increase the awareness of public opinion on the fate of the one billion hungry people in the world and the tragic death of a baby every six seconds from hunger, a video spot has been prepared, a dedicated website has been created and an appeal for a hunger strike has been made by FAO. I hope that we can count on the leaders and delegations present here to assist in the dissemination of the awareness messages when they return to their respective countries.

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Food production must expand by 70 percent in the world and double in developing countries, to meet the food needs of a world population expected to reach 9.1 billion in 2050. And this will have to happen in the face of several emerging challenges, particularly climate change and rapid urbanization.

The High-Level Expert Forum on “How to Feed the World in 2050”, organized by FAO on 12 and 13 October 2009, which brought together 300 of the best experts in various disciplines from around the world, concluded that the planet can feed itself provided that the decisions made are honoured and the required resources are effectively mobilized.

In some developed countries, two to four percent of the population are able to produce enough to feed the entire nation and even to export, while in the majority of developing countries, 60 to 80 percent of the population are not able to meet the country food needs.

The root cause of hunger and malnutrition is underinvestment in agriculture in developing countries. The part of total official development assistance going to agriculture, including forestry and fisheries, dropped from 19 percent in 1980 to around 5 percent presently. In 2004, agriculture-based economies allocated 4 percent of national public spending to the sector, far less than the 10 percent that Asia spent during the agricultural growth spurt in the 1970s.

Eliminating hunger from the face of the Earth requires 44 billion US dollars of official development assistance per year to be invested in infrastructure, technology and modern inputs. This is a small amount if we consider the 365 billion USD of agriculture producer support in OECD countries in 2007, and if we consider the 1,340 billion USD of military expenditures by the world in the same year.

In this regard, the shift in policy at the L’Aquila G8 Meeting last July, in favour of increased production by smallholders in food-deficit developing countries, advocated for years by FAO, is an encouraging sign. The Joint Statement on Global Food Security included also the decision to mobilize 20 billion USD over three years. But these are still promises which need to materialize with concrete financing in place for inputs, equipments and infrastructure for the growing season which starts in March next year for the northern hemisphere.

Naturally, developing countries need to devote themselves more funds from their budgets to agriculture, in line with the sector’s contribution to national GDP, export earnings, income generation and employment. To eradicate hunger, agriculture’s share in government expenditure of low-income food-deficit countries needs to be raised to 10 percent for investment.

Private investment should be encouraged, from both national and international sources. Relevant incentives must therefore be introduced. And to safeguard the interests of all parties and prevent situations of unequal and inequitable exchange, clear laws and regulations should be adopted and put in place, preferably within the spirit of a code of conduct on agricultural investment in developing countries.

But over the past five years, several countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia have succeeded in substantially reducing the number of hungry people in their territories. This means that we know what should be done to defeat hunger and how to do it.

(One, we need to produce where the poor and hungry live)

Your Excellencies,

Generally, in low-income food-deficit countries, food security programmes and plans exist and are awaiting political will and financing to become operational.

Following the 1996 and 2002 summits, FAO supported the preparation of National Strategies for Food Security and Agricultural Development by concerned ministries in 150 developing and transition countries.

Between 1994 and 2008, with the support of FAO, special programmes for food security were prepared at national level and implemented in 106 countries to help small farmers increase productivity and production. Today, 17 large-scale national programmes for food security are operational and 30 others are in advanced stages of formulation. With regional economic unions, twelve programmes for food security have been prepared to encourage trade with a special focus on food quality and safety. All these programmes benefit from the South-South Cooperation which was launched in 1996 and has allowed the mobilization of 1 477 experts and field technicians to foster the exchange of experience among developing countries.

In July 2003, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), prepared with the support of FAO, was approved by Heads of State and Government in Maputo, requiring 25 billion USD of annual investment for its implementation. In that framework, National Medium-Term Investment Programmes and Bankable Investment Project Profiles were prepared for 51 African countries for a total budget of 10 billion USD.

Moreover, in the sector of water control for agriculture and energy, a detailed portfolio of 1 000 short-, medium- and long-term projects and investment programmes was prepared for each of the 53 African countries in consultation with relevant ministries for a total financing envelope of 65 billion USD on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference organized by FAO, the African Union and NEPAD in Sirte in December 2008.

(Two, we need to ensure food safety and sustainable development)

But we need also to ensure food security beyond production. We have to guarantee food quality and safety for the consumers. We also need protection against pests and diseases of plants and animals which often directly affect human health. We have likewise to face emergency situations resulting from natural disasters and to conserve the national resource base of food production to ensure sustainability.

(Fighting animal diseases)

That is why the programme for Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases, which I proposed, was approved by the Council as early as June 1994. It focused, in the short term, on early warning and early reaction and, in the long term, on networking centres of excellence to develop efficient and sustainable methods of prevention and control. And let me give some examples.

Rinderpest: in 1994 FAO initiated the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme to control a dreadful disease that killed more than 1 billion cattle in the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1994 and 2009, about 170 countries and territories succeeded in eliminating rinderpest. We are now working with the OIE to declare the world free from rinderpest in 2010 or 2011. It will be the first animal disease to be eradicated in the world and the second disease in human history after smallpox.

African Swine Fever: this disease spread in the late 1950s to Europe from Africa. Since 1994, control and prevention projects for a total budget of 8 million USD have been implemented by FAO in different regions, including Africa, the Caucasus and Latin America.

Foot-and-Mouth Disease: despite the early warning provided by FAO in March and November in 2001, actions were not taken urgently. As a result, the United Kingdom had to slaughter millions of cattle for an overall financial cost of 3 billion USD and huge losses were suffered in Ireland, France and the Netherlands. From South Africa to Zimbabwe to Uruguay, the disease caused losses totalling billions of dollars. Since 1994, FAO has implemented 42 national and regional projects and programmes with a total budget of 65 million USD to control and eradication the disease.

Avian Flu: to avoid the spread of the H5N1 virus in chicken and ducks, FAO adopted between February and April 2004 four regional TCP projects for the amount of 1.6 million USD to organize cooperation among 13 Asian countries. But it was only in 2005, when the disease reached Kazakhstan and Russia on its way to Europe, that significant funding started to flow.

Economic losses to the Asian poultry sector were estimated at around 50 billion USD. FAO, in May 2005, launched the Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in partnership with OIE and WHO. Since the outbreak in early 2004, FAO's assistance included 145 national, regional and global projects for a total amount of 283 million USD benefiting 130 countries. Thanks to these efforts, the disease has been eradicated in 55 of the 60 infected countries.

H1N1: FAO has also been cooperating with WHO to deal with the outbreak of H1N1. Actions undertaken include early detection, surveillance and monitoring to avoid the risk of transmission between humans and animals with possible mutation to a more deadly virus. The Organization has been providing financial and technical support to strengthen veterinary capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean, South East Asia, and Africa to improve biosecurity and ensure rapid coordinated response.

(Protecting plants from pests and diseases)

Desert Locust: in October 2003 FAO issued an international alert on the risks of desert locust outbreaks in Mauritania, Niger and Sudan. Strong actions however lagged and were initiated only when the insect started flying and devastating crop fields. By 2005, the livelihoods of about 8 million people were affected in North and Northwest Africa and more than 13 million hectares had to be sprayed with chemical pesticides to end the plague. In 2006, FAO launched the Desert Locust Programme for the Western Region to cover nine countries extending from Libya to Senegal, in the same model as the Central Region Programme which started in 1997. Recently, unfortunately, infestation has restarted in Mauritania. Operations are ongoing for an early control of the desert locust to avoid spending again 390 million USD as during the 2003-2005 locust plague.

Ug99: the strain of wheat stem rust disease, which emerged in Uganda in 1999 and reached Iran in 2007, could have serious impacts on food security. Twenty-nine countries, accounting for 37 percent of global wheat production, are affected or at risk. The economic losses could exceed 7.5 billion USD. To combat this threat, FAO has launched with CIMMYT and ICARDA the Wheat Rust Disease Global Programme which aims to complement research efforts to develop resistant varieties and directly support countries affected or at risk.

(Food safety and quality)

Safe and nutritious food supply is being addressed by the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission and the FAO International Plant Protection Convention, two international standard setting bodies recognized as reference points by the WTO. To ensure the safety of the food we consume, over 320 standards, guidelines and codes of practice were developed covering major food products. Today, the date of expiration of perishable goods in the stores is one such example of standards common to our daily life. In addition, over 3 700 maximum residue limits for various pesticides and veterinary drugs, some 2 000 Codex food additive provisions and 150 Codex recommended maximum levels of contaminants and natural toxins have been established.

(Conserving natural resources, biodiversity and the environment)

Significant international treaties and instruments have been concluded under FAO auspices: the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (in 1995); the revised Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (in 2002); the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (in 2004); and in cooperation with UNEP, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (in 2004).

FAO also conducts actions and programmes aimed at protecting the environment. Over the past decade, close to 50 million USD were mobilized to assist 36 countries in eliminating obsolete pesticides and to build capacity in risk reduction. The Africa Stockpile Programme has become today a worldwide model.

The Integrated Pest Management programme allowed the increase of yields and the reduction of the use of chemical pesticides on important crops, such as rice, cotton and vegetables. The Farmer Field School programme in this area benefited 10 million farmers in 90 countries.

In support to climate change mitigation and adaptation policy, the FAO National Forest Programme Facility was created in 2002. The Facility is presently supporting 70 countries and regional organizations. In another major initiative, FAO established in 2008, in partnership with UNEP and UNDP, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries, known as UN-REDD. It is being implemented in nine pilot countries. A global forest monitoring system was launched last month in support of carbon accounting and payments under REDD.

(Dealing effectively with emergencies)

Your Excellencies,

About 200 million people are affected by natural disasters every year. In these situations, the Organization has to move quickly to restore agricultural production capacity and help in the rehabilitation efforts.

In response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami one of the largest programmes for the recovery of fisheries-, agriculture- and forestry-based livelihoods was implemented with 75 projects in Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

FAO has been operating 468 emergency projects in 96 countries for a total delivery in 2008-2009 of 632 million USD, financed almost entirely from voluntary contributions.

As part of these activities, poor farmers in developing countries were able to access costly seeds, fertilizers, animal feed and other inputs under the Initiative on Soaring Food Prices which was launched in December 2007. These projects, valued at nearly 400 million USD, were implemented in 93 countries with FAO's own resources and trust fund voluntary contributions. I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the European Union for the generous and timely contribution of 285 million USD to this initiative, through its Food Facility.

(Prevention, preparedness and early warning)

FAO has been able to provide effective early warnings of food shortages and emergencies thanks to its Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS). Relevant information on future trends in agricultural development and underlying issues and also statistical databases, economic analyses and projections are available and regularly updated.

That is why, as early as September 2007, FAO was able to alert the international community, through press releases, internet postings, op-eds, interviews and data, about the then-looming global food crisis triggered by high prices.

Your Excellencies,

This is only a small sample of what the Organization has been doing despite a 22-percent cut in its regular programme budget in real terms since 1994 and a 32-percent reduction in personnel. During the same period its membership increased from 169 to 192 Members and its activities and programmes in the field, in support of smallholder farmers, expanded.

The Independent External Evaluation Report has stated, and I quote, "*There is a serious misperception in some quarters as to the size and resources of FAO*". The total staff of FAO at headquarters and in the field in all regions of the world is 3 770. Its regular programme budget is USD 500 million per year. As a matter of interest, trust funds from voluntary contributions to implement projects have been increasing and are expected to reach 1 billion USD in 2009.

The Organization initiated a reform process as early as 1994 and more recently in 2004. Then in 2006, after a totally independent external evaluation, it embarked on the most comprehensive member country-led reform in the UN System, to deeply transform itself to a more efficient and effective organization. It is now implementing the Immediate Plan of Action 2009-2011 for FAO Renewal approved by the Governing Bodies.

(Finally, we need to put in place effective and efficient governance)

The reform document of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted by consensus last month is an important step towards improving food security governance. The new CFS will become the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition at global, national and local levels. The CFS secretariat, located in FAO and headed by an FAO Secretary, will include staff from the other Rome based agencies (WFP and IFAD). Further arrangements and possible changes should be decided by the CFS plenary in 2011.

A High-Level Panel of Experts will provide the CFS with the best scientific analyses and syntheses to ensure the credibility of decisions made.

But the CFS needs political legitimacy through government representation at ministerial level, in particular with the involvement of ministers of cooperation and development.

Your Excellencies,

I wish now, as requested, to speak on behalf of all three UN Rome-based agencies whose mission is to address food security. I am conscious of this great responsibility as Kanayo Nwanze, President of IFAD, Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, and I continue to work together to put food security at the top of the global agenda. We held a historic meeting on November 4 with all our senior staff.

Just last week we finalized, with Board approval from all three agencies, a strategy for intensified cooperation. This is the culmination of a two-year effort that joins our unique strengths to create a more powerful whole, building on a portfolio of nearly 400 cooperative efforts in more than 70 countries. This comprehensive approach brings together FAO, IFAD and WFP joint expertise and capacity in agriculture, food security, natural resource management, financing for developing countries and smallholder farmers, and also provision of effective hunger and nutrition solutions for the world's most vulnerable. In this way, we are helping nations implement comprehensive food security strategies. By working together we ensure food security through increased agricultural production and broadened food access through emergency response and safety nets.

Before concluding, allow me to express my sincere thanks to the participants in this Summit, and especially to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and the Heads of State and Government who despite their heavy obligations have chosen to give priority to attending a world gathering to improve the conditions of one billion hungry people.

I wish to express my appreciation to the host country, Italy, for its great hospitality. My gratitude goes also to all those who provided financial support for this Summit and especially to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia whose donation was crucial for our meeting which is entirely financed by trust fund contributions outside the regular budget of FAO.

I would like also to salute the First Ladies of the Non-Aligned Movement who, under the able leadership of Madame Suzanne Mubarak, the First Lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt, organized a meeting yesterday at FAO on the occasion of the Summit. A Message from the meeting will be read to the Plenary on her behalf.

Your Excellencies,

By adopting the Declaration prepared by Member Nations before us today and making sure it translates concretely into improving the living conditions of the poor and hungry in the world, 70 percent of whom live in rural areas, we will cross a historic milestone in achieving our goal – a world without hunger.

I thank you for your kind attention.