

34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Ministerial Roundtable on Zero Hunger

Nadi, Fiji, 12 April 2018

Meeting Report

1. Background

The Ministerial RoundTable on Zero Hunger was a ministerial segment in thirty-fourth session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) which was held in Nadi, Fiji on 12 April 2018. The objective of the Ministerial Round Table was to generate political commitment to achieve SDG 2 and translate it into actions that would benefit smallholders as well as a larger population in the region. It served to: (i) create greater awareness among Members and partners regarding the scope and achievements of the regional Zero Hunger policy processes and initiatives; and (ii) provided an overview of the regional approaches taken to address gaps and challenges to maximize impact. This event demonstrated progress made towards the Zero Hunger vision at regional and country levels, as well as the successes to date in SDG 2, achieved with support from FAO in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The event was opened by Mr José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General as keynote speaker and facilitated by Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO's Assistant Director-General/ Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific. It was followed by a video statement from the FAO Special Ambassador for Zero Hunger, Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand. Ministerial representatives from three countries, Lao PDR, Fiji and India made statements on the progress towards achieving Zero Hunger, followed by statements by the Regional Directors of the other two Rome-based Agencies (RBAs). The Ministerial Round Table on Zero Hunger ended with closing remarks from Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan. It was attended by all countries delegations of Asia and the Pacific at the APRC. Notably, member states highlighted the importance and progress on agriculture diversification and to create an enabling environment to support diversified and sustainable agriculture and food systems for Zero Hunger through inter-sectoral coordination and multi-stakeholder consultations.

To serve the background, the Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger (RI-ZH) focuses on supporting Members to achieve zero hunger by: (1) creating an enabling environment for food security and nutrition; (2) data collection, analysis and monitoring on food security and nutrition; and (3) strengthening sustainable agriculture and food systems promoting agricultural diversification and sustainable intensification. What has been done so far? RI-ZH has supported countries to strengthen and expand the national political commitment to achieve zero hunger. Many countries, including Cambodia, Fiji, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam have determined to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2025/2030 and many countries have launched the National Action Plan of Food Security and Nutrition for Zero Hunger. For instance, the Fiji Cabinet has approved the National Zero Hunger Challenge Framework in Fiji. At the regional/subregional level, RI-ZH continued to reinforce its partnership with regional organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC. During 2016-2017, under the leadership of ADG/RR, RI-ZH also focused on Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS) to promote NUS that are nutrition-dense, climate-resilient, economically-viable and locally adaptable at the country level which has been further developed into the Future Smart Food (FSF) Initiative, endorsed by the FAO Director-General.

2. Agenda Items

| Items | Speakers/panelists/facilitator |
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| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction by Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific. |
| Keynote speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General |
| Special remark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO Special Ambassador for Zero Hunger, Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand |
| Ministerial Statements | <p>On Progress Towards Achieving Zero Hunger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H.E. Inia Seruiratu, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, Fiji (tbc) H.E. PhouangParisak Pravongviengkham, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, the Lao People's Democratic Republic H.E. Shri G.S. Shekhawat, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, India (delivered by High Commissioner of India in Fiji) |
| Regional Directors of the Other Two Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr David Kaatrud, Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific Bureau Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board Mr Paul Winters, Associate Vice-President a.i., Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD), IFAD |
| Closing remarks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific |

3. Summary of the Statements

Ms Kundhavi Kadiresan, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, opened the Ministerial Roundtable discussion on Zero hunger. She highlighted the Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger which focuses on promoting agricultural diversification with sustainable intensification, dietary diversification and livelihood diversification. She also introduced that the day of the conference was the day to launch the FAO publication on Future Smart Food: rediscovering the multidimensional value of neglected and underutilized species in Asia for Zero Hunger.

Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, FAO Director General, gave a keynote speech on Zero Hunger. He highlighted that despite the decline of undernourished people in the recent decade, the numbers are currently rising by various reasons differing by regions. The increase of undernourished people in Africa is caused by impact of climate change, increase in Latin America and South American countries are due to economic crisis and impact from impossibility of job creation. For Asia, the region has the most vulnerable people facing hunger and malnutrition. Also, the reasons can be impact of climate change, slow down on growth and non-inclusive growth in rural areas. He stressed out that to achieve hunger, we need to accelerate actions. More attention to rural development and advancing the lives of family farmers are needed. He specified the need of adaptation of agricultural sectors to the impact of climate change by promoting more resilient agriculture technology, smart agriculture and agroecology. He called out attention to specific policies to address poor in the region, especially family farmers. Also, he mentioned that the recent increase of overweight and obesity has to be looked at. He suggested local policies such as promoting healthy food at school level by purchasing local family farm products. Lastly, he emphasized the need of coordination with IFAD and WFP to achieve Zero Hunger.

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, FAO Special Ambassador on Zero Hunger, gave special recorded remarks for the APRC34 conference. As FAO's Special Ambassador, Her Royal Highness Princess raised issues that are central to achieving SDG2 and highlighted the need to address the recent increase of overweight and obesity in the region which results in serious illness such as diabetes and kidney disease. She stressed that the FAO's signature program, the Zero Hunger Challenge, has provided Thailand, as well as other countries in the region, the impetus for improving access to food and providing better nutrition. She encouraged the availability of diverse and balanced diets through sustainable production and education on nutrition. Building from her experience and endeavors to provide diverse, balanced and healthy food to the people of Thailand and other countries in the region, she pointed out the necessity to manage environment factors such as soil, water and climate. She highlighted the need to diversify agriculture to create dietary diversity to ensure healthy diets and address malnutrition in all forms. She lastly mentioned that she expects exchange of know-how on ways to eliminate hunger and improve nutrition from this gathering of Ministries and policymakers.

After the welcome remarks, three countries in the region shared their experiences on achieving Zero Hunger. **Chair of APRC, Minister of Agriculture, Rural development of FIJI** presented the experience of Fiji. Fiji have made substantial achievement in Zero Hunger vision, being awarded from achieving MDG in 2014 and look forward to more achievements. He introduced remaining challenges such as the need to ensure food security for both people of Fiji and the tourists and growing of triple burden of malnutrition. These challenges have led government to make policies and commitment to ensure food secure and nutrition safe environment. Fiji came up with "2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda" document which aims to modernize agriculture sector to ensure productivity and enabling environment for small holder farmers. He gave a brief on Fiji's outcome of crop strategy and livestock strategy which was settled after consultations, meetings and workshops. He stressed the need for development of policies which can improve the agriculture, local products, address import level, increase export levels and also help other countries to end hunger. He emphasized the need to develop policies in cross cutting view and multi-sectoral way. He also suggested strategies such as climate smart and sustainable agriculture, introduction of organic products, organizing organic standards as well as more attention on chemical inputs in agriculture, resilience of crops and targeting school feeding programs.

Following the speech from the Minister of Agriculture of Fiji, **H.E. Dr. PhouangParisak Pravongviengkham, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao People's Democratic Republic** gave a speech on Lao PDR's experience on Zero Hunger challenge. Agriculture takes a big part in Lao PDR by agriculture sector contributing over sixteen percent of the country's GDP. From the government's long term strategies and policies in agriculture, forestry and rural development, the agricultural production volume increased substantially and achieved reduction of stunting children under five years in the recent five years. However addressing Zero Hunger is still a big challenge in Lao PDR and striving to achieve the vision. FAO was officially established in Lao PDR in 1978 and has been working in Lao PDR for 40 years with a strong focus on cooperation and programs in the field of food security and nutrition and rural development. The Government of Lao PDR shows great commitment in achieving eradication of all forms of malnutrition by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on 25 September 2015 and launching the National Zero Hunger Challenge in May 2015 which includes key projects such as the climate resilient interventions and smart practices and farmer field schools. The poverty eradication remains at the top of the Government agenda as the main objective of Lao PDR's 5 years development Plan, aiming to graduate from the Least Developed Countries status by 2020. He introduced the Lao PDR's policy, strategies and plans which FAO and other partner projects are is closely aligned with, having focus on food security,

commercial agriculture, sustainable forest resource management and rural development and poverty reduction with policies having 10 action plans.

Dr. PhouangParisak Pravongviengkham highlighted that Lao PDR is one of the Zero Hunger challenge countries that promote agricultural diversification actively. Lao PDR is a pioneer country for the Future Smart Food initiative led by FAO Director-General and will be promoting production, marketing and consumption of neglected and underutilized species, emphasizing the diversity of locally hidden treasures that could both benefit consumers and improve farmer livelihoods. The National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) of Lao PDR has contributed to the FAO's Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger, including participating in three FAO regional consultations and contributing to the publication on Future Smart Food. Furthermore, the FAO/EU FIRST program supported the development of a framework of Good Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) which is currently implemented under the National Nutrition Plan of Action, covering all provinces.

Rising challenge in Lao PDR's national food security is impacts of climate change such as, more frequent flooding and outbreaks of diseases. In this regard, the Lao PDR government approved the National strategy on Climate Change and action plans to manage the impacts focusing on mitigation and adaptation in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, land use change, water resources, energy, transportation, industry and public health. He stated that FAO's support for the regional actions and engagement of agriculture sectors to implement the Climate Change elements in the 2030 agenda in Asia and Pacific is critical to help the region take necessary actions and address the major threat.

He introduced practices in Lao PDR to ensure food safety; promoting clean and organic agriculture as a competitive export strategy, improving nutritional value of local foods and adapting laws and regulations related to food safety and nutrition. He called out attention on the need to address the remaining constraints such as, lack of documentation and research on food borne diseases within the country and limited infrastructure and human capacity to monitor food contamination. He pointed out the need of producing and commercializing rich indigenous niche products. Lastly, he emphasized the sustainable political commitment, national inter-ministerial coverage, coordination of donors and contributors, the need of utilizing SSC in terms of technical development and capacity building.

The last national speaker, High Commissioner of India in Fiji, on behalf of **H.E. Shri G.S. Shekhawat, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in India**, gave an overview on the experience of agriculture development in India. He stated he take pride in India by meeting needs of population and playing a major role in global agriculture with exports of cotton, animal products, rice and sugar. However, complex challenges in hunger and malnutrition remains and he stressed that Zero hunger is able to achieve by sustainable agriculture and diversification. Also, he stressed the need to build sustainable food system by inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral coordination to provide adequate and sufficient food for everyone. He emphasized the need to promote sustainable production, process and marketing of the Neglected Underutilized Species (NUS) such as millets. Regarding Future Smart Food, he highlighted that India has worked in finding hidden treasures and FAORAP provided technical support to India to identify NUS as FSF which led to accomplish the National Year of Millets in India 2018. He disclosed India government's work for eradication of all forms of malnutrition by establishing National food security on 2013 and launch of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) on March 2018 which was initiated to provide access to adequate quantity and quality of food.

After the speech by delegations from each country, two other Rome-based agency colleagues made speech on Zero Hunger. The first to make a speech was **Mr David Kaatrud, Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific Bureau Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board**. WFP has worked in Fiji for 40 years

with mandate especially on SDG2. WFP primarily worked for food security on food access and utilization. He stressed the importance of UN strategies to be aligned with country strategic plans. He introduced WFP's works to achieve SDG2 vision such as nutrition intervention by promoting adequate feeding practices and indigenous products. WFP's work at community level include supporting small holder farmers and discovering social safety nets such as school feeding which stimulates local production and dietary diversity, education in nutrition behavioral change and supports small holder farmers. He mentioned that Asia countries are vulnerable to climate change and managing risks are vital in the area. To address the challenges, he emphasized the need of developed technology on food security monitoring and early warning system. He stated Fiji has leading methods for managing risks by having enhanced food reserves which can supply chain management, social protection scheme and shock responsive protection program. He lastly emphasized that the coordination, design and adaptability of initiating the program is the key to achieve Zero Hunger vision.

The last delegation to make a speech was **Mr Paul Winters, Associate Vice-President a.i., Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD), IFAD**. IFAD provides grants to counties to invest in rural areas in terms of investments. The speaker pointed out three big points to be considered in addressing Zero Hunger. Firstly, he highlighted the dynamics in the changing world. Economics and agriculture is transforming by changes in diet, food system and facing climate change. In the course of 12 years to achieve SDGs, dynamic context has to be put into attention. Secondly, it is critical to decide what crops to invest between staple and neglected or diversified crops. This choice affects markets and consumption and all people including women, indigenous people and young people. Lastly, he pointed out the importance of ways to invest. The investment has to be made sure that national strategies are well coordinated with Rome based agencies, collaborated with civil societies and communities.

Lastly, **Ms. Kundhavi Kadiresan**, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, closed the Ministerial Roundtable discussion on Zero hunger by emphasizing the need of turning policies into concrete actions to promote agricultural diversification and sustainable food systems for Zero Hunger through cross-cutting innovative approaches with multi stakeholder coordination.