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CONFERENCE

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High-Level Conferences on World Food Security and Global Challenges

I. Challenges

1. In advocating for and supporting international and national efforts to achieve the food security objectives endorsed by the World Food Summit and reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, FAO and its partners are being called upon to assist the international community in facing new global challenges that relate to the close inter-linkages among food security, climate change and bioenergy. Such challenges demand a more integrated and comprehensive response within broader strategies designed to address mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change and bioenergy, especially for the most vulnerable populations.
2. Climate change affects agriculture performance by altering the availability of water, land, biodiversity and terrestrial ecosystem services, and heightens uncertainties throughout the food chain, from yields to trade dynamics among countries and ultimately the global economy. This will affect food security and the ability to feed 9 billion people by 2050. Climate change impacts on forests, including forest dieback and forest fires, will exacerbate adverse effects on soil and water resources and hence on the dependent food systems of over 400 million people directly depending on forests for food and livelihoods. Furthermore, climate change impact on marine, coastal, estuarine and freshwater ecosystems is likely to affect many of the 200 million people directly or indirectly dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods, through changes in nature, distribution and productivity of aquatic resources and heightened vulnerability of communities living in low-lying remote regions with increasing prevalence of natural disasters, such as flooding and cyclones.
3. Bioenergy places further demands on agricultural products as well as on the natural resources necessary to meet food and rural employment requirements. Rapidly changing environmental conditions and increased competition over productive resources in turn affect human security in all its forms.
4. Food security policies and other policies aiming to reduce hunger and poverty, especially in rural areas where the poor live, will need to respond to these new challenges.

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II. FAO's Role and Mandate

5. Agriculture is both a source and sink for greenhouse gases, as well as a source and a user of energy. While recognizing the role of agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the climate and energy debates, current international negotiations and mechanisms (e.g. Kyoto Protocol, Nairobi Framework) do not directly address food security and rural livelihoods. In accordance with its mandate, FAO has the responsibility to inform, warn and prepare the international community and its member countries on threats and opportunities related to climate change and the recent rise of bioenergy development. It also has a responsibility to facilitate decision and action by bringing together policy-makers, producers and non-governmental organizations to discuss and agree on relevant pathways for mitigation, adaptation and coping mechanisms that would enable the food and agriculture sector, including its ecological foundations, to deal with climate change challenges. At the same time, the Organization and its partners must enable a more integrated response in dealing with competing demands for agricultural resources arising from the production of bioenergy, particularly biofuel, which is to some extent driven by climate issues, in addition to concerns over energy security.
6. Building on its own comparative strengths, together with those of its partners, particularly the Rome-based agencies and other relevant organizations within the UN system, as well as research institutions, universities and non-governmental organizations, FAO will seek to support national and international responses to these challenges, including multilateral instruments, as well as national strategies and policies, ensuring that capacity building for mitigation and adaptation also adequately takes into account the nexus among food security, climate change and bioenergy.
7. The Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees (5 September 2007), in reviewing the proposed PWB 2008-09, "...acknowledged that some limited adjustments to existing programmes had been made, particularly to take more fully on board new challenges such as climate change and bioenergy". The PWB 2008-09 is designed to respond to these challenges through programmes that focus on FAO's comparative advantages and strengthen the linkages between global analytical work and the experience gained from local application, while emphasizing multidisciplinary action and taking maximum advantage of external alliances. The aim for climate change is to progressively reflect major contributions inherent in FAO's mandate, towards both mitigation and adaptation policies and measures, as well as climate-related disaster risk management. Work on bioenergy will identify its threats and potential in an equitable manner, ensuring that the food security, socio-economic and environmental sustainability dimensions are understood and fully taken into account.
8. Approved changes in the programme and organizational structure of FAO during 2006-07 have facilitated more coherent implementation of these important multidisciplinary thrusts. Emphasis on climate change and bioenergy is reflected under programme entities 2KP07 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and 2KP06 Bioenergy, coordinated by the related interdepartmental working groups under the leadership of the new Environment, Climate Change and Bioenergy Division. In addition, the cross-cutting programme entity 3BA04 Socioeconomic analysis of global perspective issues in food and agriculture seeks to identify potential future problems associated with expected long-term developments in world food, nutrition, agriculture and natural resource use, which require corrective agricultural policies.
9. During 2008, a series of expert meetings and two high level conferences are planned to be organised, primarily with extrabudgetary resources and in collaboration with multilateral partners as necessary, to ensure that food security and sustainable management of natural resources are fully reflected in the ongoing international debate on bioenergy and climate change.

III. Expert Meetings on Climate Change and Bioenergy

10. In order to provide an evidence base for sector response strategies and assisting with emerging demands from countries, FAO will assemble the best available knowledge and tap relevant networks through Expert Meetings on:
 - Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
 - Climate change and food and water security;
 - Climate-related transboundary pests and diseases, including relevant aquatic species;
 - Climate change and disaster risk management;
 - Bioenergy policy, markets and trade and food security;
 - Global perspectives and food and fuel security.
11. The Expert Meetings will be held between January and March 2008. A short narrative for each of these meetings is provided in Appendix.
12. Each of these Expert Meetings will examine the opportunities and constraints for agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors, including cross-sectoral linkages between food security, rural development (including coastal and inland waters) and the environment, as well as related key areas for investment and research, methods and tools, capacity-building, regulatory frameworks, policy implications (at national and international levels), possible partnerships and available investment and financial instruments (old and new).
13. Each meeting will specifically examine how more integrated forms of action with other relevant institutions could strengthen support to global, regional and country level responses, through better management of the multiple dimensions of food security, climate change and bioenergy, keeping in mind the socio-economic impacts and livelihoods of vulnerable groups.

IV. High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy

14. It is proposed to hold a High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008. All FAO members countries, relevant inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as other relevant institutions will be invited to participate. The Conference will build on findings from the above-mentioned Expert Meetings.
15. The overall purpose of the proposed Conference would be to address food security and poverty reduction in the face of climate change and energy security. More specifically, the objective would be to assess the challenges faced by the food and agriculture sectors from climate change and bioenergy in order to identify the steps required to safeguard food security within the broader context of action being recommended to address climate change and bioenergy at the global, regional and national levels. It should thus contribute to the UN system efforts in the field of climate change.
16. The High-Level Conference will deliver the following:
 - A better understanding of the nexus between food security, climate change and bioenergy, based on science and current international policies and practices;
 - Identification of a process for institutional action for the integration of food security safeguards into multilateral climate-related agreements, such as the Clean Development Mechanism and post-Kyoto Protocol;
 - Identification of steps for the establishment of a Bioenergy Charter that simultaneously considers sustainable agriculture, rural development and food security;

- A definition of FAO's response through field interventions, partnerships and multilateral and regional cooperation, including assistance for tapping financial mechanisms;
- A Statement on Food Security, Climate Change and Bioenergy.

17. Given that the achievement of global and national/regional food security and rural poverty goals (WFS and MDG targets) is significantly dependent on the development of the agriculture and rural sectors, relevant partners inside and outside the UN system will be relied upon to address certain multisectoral issues, thus resulting in an enhanced international cooperation.

V. High-Level Conference on Feeding the World in 2050

18. It is further proposed to hold a High-Level Conference on Feeding the World in 2050. Such an event will bring together world leaders and international personalities to discuss options for a common vision and relevant forward-looking pathways for a broader focus that addresses, besides bioenergy and climate change, other drivers of global change.

19. Dramatic changes such as uneven population growth (9 billion people in 2050, mainly in developing countries), migration and urbanization, new food market structures and consumption patterns require new strategies and actions as regards availability, access, stability and utilization of the food system.

20. The development cooperation context is also changing, including new modalities for financing, the emergence of new sources of investment and assistance from civil society and the private sector and the role of multilateral institutions in shaping national development plans. This calls for adjustments within FAO's strategic planning and role within the broader UN system, so that the Organization can fulfill its mandate and contribute to achieving the MDGs.

21. The aim of the High-Level Conference on Feeding the World in 2050 is to strategically focus on future challenges and establish processes that will define FAO's long-term vision for food and agriculture, including forestry and fisheries. The report of the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) which is before the Conference contains an important recommendation towards the issuance of a new Strategic Framework (SF) for FAO. Subject to the outcome of the IEE as may be decided by the November 2007 Conference, the IEE foresees the formulation of a draft SF during 2008 and final adoption of the new SF by the regular session of the Conference to be held in 2009. High-level inputs would need to assist the consultative process envisaged for formulating the new SF during 2008-2009. While the proposed High-Level Conference would have a much broader focus than simply the role and future activities of FAO in the light of identified challenges, it is clear that its preparatory process would naturally feed into the formulation of the SF, particularly in articulating the above-mentioned long-term vision. The Process in 2008-09

22. A dedicated website, including E-conferencing, will be created for the proposed High-Level Conferences and preparatory events, in order to offer interactive features which will allow member countries and other stakeholders to interact and share knowledge and views before, during and after the events.

23. Side events will be held during the FAO Regional Conferences in 2008 in order to inform on progress and extend the consultative process as much as possible. Also, consultative meetings will be held with NGOs and the private sector, as well as briefing sessions during the preparatory process and follow-up of the events, including in other United Nations bodies' meetings such as those of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

24. The above-mentioned activities represent important steps toward strengthening FAO's capacity to meet future challenges. Discussions with member countries, the scientific community and international partners will significantly contribute to shaping a reformed FAO, including a new FAO Strategic Framework.

VI. Appendix: Expert Meetings

A. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

25. This Expert Meeting will review various mitigation and gender-sensitive adaptation options and implementation strategies that have significant potential to maintain or enhance food security in a sustainable and economically viable way for vulnerable people. It will propose strategic lines of action for FAO and its partners to address and respond to the challenges and the uncertainties posed by a changing climate, and to address these in national plans for food security. It will seek to share experiences among countries in defining guidelines and plans for agriculture, fisheries and forestry adaptation measures, including the existing available tools promoting resilience and gender-sensitive coping strategies. It will identify economic mechanisms to promote environmental service payments that could ensure that farmers, fisherfolks and foresters are adequately compensated for mitigation measures. It will identify financing modalities for national capacity building in the implementation of strategies and action.

B. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

26. Climate change is expected to substantially impact the availability, variability and annual distribution of freshwater resources. Agriculture uses about 70% of all water withdrawal and, in a situation of water scarcity, agriculture, inland fisheries and aquaculture are expected to be significantly affected by such changes. This Expert Meeting will review possible scenarios in terms of the impact of climate change on the global hydraulic regime and possible impacts on water management for food production. It will appraise adaptation options and implementation strategies that have significant potential to maintain or enhance water management and food security in a sustainable and economically viable way. It will propose strategic lines of action for FAO and its partners to address, and respond to, the uncertainties posed by a changing climate and to develop plans for enhanced water management for food production.

C. CLIMATE-RELATED TRANSBOUNDARY PESTS AND DISEASES INCLUDING RELEVANT AQUATIC SPECIES

27. This Expert Meeting will review existing knowledge on the linkages between climate change and the changes in pest and disease risks, with respect to plants and animals, and related human health and food security. It will also evaluate the likely consequences of climate change on fish diseases and aquatic invasive species and the impacts on fisheries and aquaculture, as well as suitable preventative and adaptation measures. Based on a regional approach, it will identify diseases and pests posing particular risks, considering their increase of incidence and/or distribution and potential impact, as driven by changes in climate. It will propose suitable preventive and adaptation strategies and provide guidance on disease and pest surveillance and control, through the review of available agreements, tools, strategies and programmes such as EMPRES. It will identify partnerships and financing modalities for national capacity building.

D. CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

28. This Expert Meeting will consider cross-sectoral linkages between likely climate change impacts and disasters' nature and frequency, as well as opportunities for enhanced risk reduction and management by affected vulnerable groups, with particular focus on the implications for agriculture (crop and animal), forestry, fisheries and their contribution to food security. It will examine the current state of knowledge and best practices in disaster management and risk reduction in the context of climate change. It will propose new directions in disaster risk reduction and management and assess the need for more specific international financing mechanisms to support capacity-building related to food security within the framework of disaster risk reduction, preparedness and adaptation to climate change in high-risk and low-capacity countries.

E. BIOENERGY POLICY, MARKETS AND TRADE AND FOOD SECURITY

29. This Expert Meeting will take stock of global bioenergy policies and their nature and rationale, against a backdrop of developments that have set the scene for those policies. It will assess various future (cost and benefit) scenarios for the demand for energy, sources of supply, energy prices and the economics of biofuel production to meet the increasing demand for different feed-stocks, including research and development related to second generation feedstocks and technologies in various countries. It will also assess the impact of biofuel policies and production on global commodity markets and trade, including the cumulative market impact of current/proposed targets on future market outcomes, as well as distributional analysis of winners and losers from higher biofuel production, in both the short and long terms.

F. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND FOOD AND FUEL SECURITY

30. This Expert Meeting will review the impact of bioenergy production and biofuel policies on income, gender-based land use patterns and food security. It will focus on global perspectives and the growth of the bioenergy sector, its potential and the likely short and long term impacts on rural producers, agricultural incomes and food security, drawing on examples at national and household levels. It will also promote dialogue on emerging mechanisms aimed at ensuring that food security and environmental concerns are properly incorporated in sustainable bioenergy development strategies and programmes.