

REPORT

Bangkok
Thailand
26-31 March
2009

Twenty-ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific



FAO Member Nations in the Asia Region

Afghanistan	Japan	Philippines
Bangladesh	Kazakhstan	Sri Lanka
Bhutan	Republic of Korea	Thailand
Cambodia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Timor-Leste
China	Malaysia	Uzbekistan
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Maldives	Viet Nam
India	Mongolia	
Indonesia	Myanmar	
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Nepal	
	Pakistan	

FAO Member Nations in the Southwest Pacific Region

Australia	Nauru	Tuvalu
Cook Islands	New Zealand	United States of America
Fiji	Niue	Vanuatu
France	Palau	
Kiribati	Papua New Guinea	
Marshall Islands	Samoa	
Micronesia (Federated States of)	Solomon Island	
	Tonga	

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific

First	- Bangalore, India, 27 July – 5 August 1953
Second	- Kandy, Ceylon, 20-25 June 1955
Third	- Bandung, Indonesia, 8-18 October 1956
Fourth	- Tokyo, Japan, 6-16 October 1958
Fifth	- Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam, 21-30 November 1960
Sixth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-29 September 1962
Seventh	- Manila, Philippines, 7-21 November 1964
Eighth	- Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-24 September 1966
Ninth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 4-15 November 1968
Tenth	- Canberra, Australia, 27 August – 8 September 1970
Eleventh	- New Delhi, India, 17-27 October 1972
Twelfth	- Tokyo, Japan, 17-27 September 1974
Thirteenth	- Manila, Philippines, 5-13 August 1976
Fourteenth	- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 July – 3 August 1978
Fifteenth	- New Delhi, India, 5-13 March 1980
Sixteenth	- Jakarta, Indonesia, 1-11 June 1982
Seventeenth	- Islamabad, Pakistan, 24 April – 3 May 1984
Eighteenth	- Rome, Italy, 8-17 July 1986
Nineteenth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 11-15 July 1988
Twentieth	- Beijing, China, 23-27 April 1990
Twenty-first	- New Delhi, India, 10-14 February 1992
Twenty-second	- Manila, Philippines, 3-7 October 1994
Twenty-third	- Apia, Western Samoa, 14-18 May 1996
Twenty-fourth	- Yangon, Myanmar, 20-24 April 1998
Twenty-fifth	- Yokohama, Japan, 28 August-1 September 2000
Twenty-sixth	- Kathmandu, Nepal, 13-15 May 2002
Twenty-seventh	- Beijing, China, 17-21 May 2004
Twenty-eighth	- Jakarta, Indonesia, 15-19 May 2006
Twenty-ninth	- Bangkok, Thailand, 26-31 March 2009

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Twenty-ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations**

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministerial-Level Session of the Conference

Emerging Issues and Priorities on Food and Agricultural Development in the Region

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *encouraged* member countries to develop early warning systems for rapid response to disasters and emergencies and *requested* FAO to support the development of such early systems and assist countries with disaster preparedness, emergency relief, and long-term post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation, as required.
2. *encouraged* increased regional cooperation in addressing the threats of transboundary animal diseases and *requested* FAO to facilitate regional cooperation and networking, work to harmonize legislation, regulations and control measures, and strengthen bio-security and other efforts to combat the spread of diseases and invasive species.
3. *urged* Governments and international organizations to seek mechanisms for reducing the volatility and unpredictability of food and agricultural commodities and *encouraged* member countries and international organizations, including FAO, to consider the establishment of regional or global food reserves in anticipation of future perturbations.
4. *encouraged* expanded collaboration through the South-South cooperation framework and *urged* FAO to expand collaboration with relevant regional organizations. The Conference further *urged* member countries to facilitate and support effective partnerships among development workers at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels to enhance progress towards food security objectives.

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. *recommended* that member countries assist small-scale farmers by clarifying land tenure and access to resources, facilitating market access and providing supporting services such as training, extension, credit, and rural infrastructure.
2. *urged* member countries to implement responsible fishing practices and cooperate in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
3. *urged* developed countries to meet commitments they had made to increase development assistance in agriculture in a timely manner, despite the hardships of the current economic downturn.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in formulating and implementing practical climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, including promotion and exchange of information on appropriate agricultural practices, participatory planting calendars, and research and development on salt-tolerant and drought- and flood-resistant varieties of crops needed to respond to anticipated climate change.

2. *urged* FAO to continue supporting member countries in implementing sustainable forest management, including measures related to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. *requested* FAO to assist in promoting practical crop insurance schemes and social safety nets, in particular targeting small farmers.
4. *urged* FAO to continue its assessment of the opportunities and risks associated with bioenergy development and provide sound and balanced information, policy advice and technical support to member countries.
5. *requested* FAO to support the development of regulatory frameworks and management policies for fisheries, provide technical assistance to meet the emerging traceability requirements of international markets, and support sustainable aquaculture development.
6. *called on* FAO to strengthen the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to provide the necessary resources to serve the needs of the region in a more timely and effective manner.
7. *urged* FAO to further streamline and devolve decision-making and management authorities to the Regional Office and to further strengthen the Sub-regional Office for the Pacific.
8. *requested* FAO to submit a fully formulated Regional Priority Framework for its review and consideration at the next Regional Conference and report on the restructuring and strengthening of the regional office to address these priorities.
9. *recommended* enhanced linkages between the Regional Technical Commissions and the Regional Conference.

Global and Regional Emergency Issues: Transboundary Animal Diseases in the Region and Looking at the Environmental Factors Affecting Its Occurrence

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *requested* FAO to facilitate regional efforts that would lead to harmonizing policies and strategies, common legislation on border control, strengthening veterinary services and development of regional disease outbreak preparedness plans.
2. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in developing surveillance plans for early warning and response to disease outbreaks, strengthening capacity related to epidemiology and economic research, and to explore the technical feasibility of establishing more regional reference laboratories that would meet international standards.
3. *requested* FAO to pursue the establishment of regional support units under the Global Framework for the Control and Prevention of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TAD) that would consist of epidemiology and laboratory reference centers to assist countries, especially in times of disease emergencies.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *urged* FAO to pursue further multi-disciplinary studies to fully understand the occurrence and spread of emerging diseases.

Policy, Strategies and Technical Options for Coping with Water Scarcity

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in developing comprehensive policy and strategic frameworks for coping with water scarcity.
2. *encouraged* member countries to support investments in irrigation systems by strengthening capacity at all levels and adopting benchmarking systems to monitor the effects of policy change and performance improvements in the irrigation sector. The Conference *requested* FAO to scale up its regional irrigation modernization programme in support of these efforts.
3. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in promoting conservation agriculture, integrated pest management, integrated plant nutrition, sustainable forest management, best practices in livestock production, more efficient processing and marketing processes, water treatment facilities for industrial and marketing complexes, and other measures to conserve and protect water resources and water quality, *inter alia* to protect inland fisheries, aquatic resources and aquaculture.
4. *requested* FAO, in collaboration with other relevant organizations, to continue facilitating regional and international dialogue on water scarcity issues and transboundary cooperation in the management of water resources.
5. *urged* FAO to support the establishment of regional networks of experts, including civil society organizations, to facilitate the sharing of knowledge (including traditional knowledge), information, experiences, technologies and best practices related to water management and approaches for coping with water scarcity.
6. *supported* the launch of a regional initiative on re-inventing irrigation and agricultural water governance in Asia and the Pacific, with a goal of enhancing water management at all levels through knowledge sharing, capacity building and implementation.
7. *urged* FAO to give high priority to assisting member countries in developing policies, strategies and capacities for coping with water scarcity, and to strengthen its own capacity and resources, accordingly, in the Regional Office, and also in headquarters.

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. *encouraged* member countries to develop systemic national responses to water scarcity that address policy, institutional, legal, economic and technical obstacles, adopt more effective and strategically focused investment strategies in water management, assess the potential of international trade to offset water scarcity, and enhance regional cooperation.
2. *encouraged* member countries to focus on water-use efficiency and agricultural productivity along the value chain from farm to market, including on-farm water management, irrigation system performance, improved governance and adjustments of national water and irrigation policies.
3. *encouraged* member countries to boost the productivity of rainfed agriculture by providing incentives for the adoption of practices that minimize water risks, such as water harvesting, and by developing and promoting the use of seeds tolerant to flooding, salinity and drought.
4. *recommended* that member countries implement service-oriented reforms of irrigation institutions and adopt demand-driven irrigation modernization strategies focusing on cost-effective

water service delivery, while recognizing multiple uses and services of agricultural water and extending participatory management to various local actors.

5. *encouraged* countries to consider the development of mechanisms for the compensation of providers of environmental services, as appropriate.

6. *encouraged* member countries to develop and report reliable information on agricultural water use, facilitate effective dialogue among key water sector interests, establish robust and transparent methods to negotiate allocation amongst competing water uses and users, and address institutional, technological and economic obstacles constraining progress towards optimal intra- and inter-sectoral water allocations.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *requested* FAO to strengthen AQUASTAT in the region.
2. *requested* FAO to support the development of practical adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change in the region.
3. *encouraged* FAO to collaborate with regional centers of excellence, such as the Asia Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, to develop and promote appropriate and affordable water management technologies and mechanization for effective on-farm water management.

Agribusiness and Competitive Agro-Industries in the Context of Globalization and Free Trade

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *urged* FAO to: (i) conduct inter-ministerial dialogues to identify priority actions for fostering the development of agro-industries; (ii) encourage public-private partnerships for strengthening business and entrepreneurial skills of smallholders and accelerate their inclusion into value chains; and (iii) support the development of environments that enable smallholder involvement in, and benefit from, sustainable agro-industries.
2. *recommended* that FAO continue promoting agro-industries and value chains that deliver benefits to smallholder farmers and small agro-enterprises by assisting member countries to improve services to agro-industries, promoting practices that add value for small farmers, and helping small farmers respond to changing markets and consumer requirements.
3. *urged* FAO to work with member countries to build capacity among small producers for meeting industry standards and requirements.
4. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in their efforts to: (i) analyze trends and characteristics of agri-food, agro-industry and value chains; (ii) establish information and knowledge management systems related to agribusiness and agro-industries; (iii) review and revise, as appropriate, agribusiness and agro-industry policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, institutions and services; and (iv) assess market and agribusiness opportunities with a view towards prioritizing specific agro-industries and value chains for development.

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. *encouraged* member countries to further support agri-business and agro-industry development, where appropriate, by reforming policies and strengthening institutions, clarifying legal and regulatory frameworks, fostering public-private cooperation, enhancing the roles of local organizations, reviewing institutional mandates, and balancing the pace and nature of agro-industry development with poverty and food security objectives.
2. *urged* member countries to support the development of practical micro-finance and credit schemes for small-scale agro-industries and their suppliers.

Aid-for-Trade Initiative and the Role of FAO***For the attention of Governments and FAO***

The Conference:

1. *requested* FAO to assist member countries in prioritizing activities under the initiative, preparing investment proposals, and implementing country and regionally focused trade-related activities.
2. *urged* FAO to: (i) continue to provide assistance to member countries on the ongoing Doha Round negotiations; (ii) re-orient and expand work to cover the growing needs for information and assistance on regional and bilateral trade negotiations and their implementation; and (iii) undertake studies and analyses, including those on best practices, to enable member countries to adopt appropriate trade policies and Aid-in-Trade measures that enhance the contribution of trade to agricultural development, equitable distribution of benefits, sustainable food security and poverty reduction.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *recommended* that FAO continue to collaborate with the WTO and other development partners in elaborating the Aid-for-Trade initiative for the agricultural sector, and *urged* FAO to play a lead role in facilitating the implementation of the initiative in the area of agriculture.

Regional State of Food and Agriculture***For the attention of Governments and FAO***

The Conference:

1. *agreed* that the most effective response to the recent and potential rise in food prices should be to ensure long-term investment in productivity-enhancing measures to increase food supplies and ease the pressure on the natural resource base.
2. *recognized* the benefits of increased involvement of all stakeholders concerned with agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries in discussions and negotiations related to the sector. It was noted that much of the discussion regarding biodiversity, climate change and bioenergy and desertification was taking place without effective participation of the agriculture sector. The Conference *welcomed* suggestions that member countries pursue integrated planning and policy

development among all relevant agencies, the private sector and civil society, and ensure that the interests of agriculture were well represented in regional and international negotiations related to, and affecting, the sector.

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. *acknowledged* that crop, livestock and fish production and excessive use of chemicals and fertilizers can have profound effects on the wider environment and *agreed* that more sustainable methods of production and intensification are needed to minimize or reverse these negative impacts.
2. *recognized* the need for governments to renew efforts to develop well-functioning markets, clearly define property rights, improve natural resource management, and improve rural education, health services, infrastructure and agricultural research and extension in order to achieve sustainable rural development, reduce poverty and enhance food security.

Recommendations and Activities of the Regional Commissions

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *appreciated* the work of the Regional Technical Commissions and recognized that they play important coordinating and policy roles in the region. Member countries valued the Regional Technical Commissions and *encouraged* them to continue their activities, working in close collaboration with other regional bodies and national institutions to avoid duplication.
2. *recognized* the opportunity for the FAO Regional Technical Commissions to forge closer linkages with the Regional Conference by giving more thorough consideration of the findings, recommendations and activities of the commissions. The Conference *welcomed* the suggestion that the work of the FAO Regional Technical Commissions could become a more substantive agenda item in future sessions of the Regional Conference.

Food Safety and Trade in Asia-Pacific

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *agreed* that regional collaboration and cooperation, such as that supported through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), was crucial in addressing existing and emerging food safety issues.

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. *recognized* the need to strengthen national food-control systems, improve the coordination of food safety activities from farm-to-table and generally raise awareness of the importance of food safety.
2. *acknowledged* that for many countries in Asia and the Pacific SPS measures impede trade because the countries concerned are experiencing difficulties in obtaining information and complying

with the measures. The Conference cautioned that food safety measures should not be utilized as an excuse in trade protection.

3. *recognized* that one of the most significant challenges faced by the public sector in relation to food safety was the rapid proliferation of private standards for food quality and safety established by retailers, food industry, agri-business firms and others.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *appreciated* the capacity building work of FAO in the area of food safety and welcomed FAO's intention to strengthen its technical assistance to member countries and regional organizations in the area of food safety, including collaboration in the transfer of technology.

Other Business

For the attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

1. *supported* the view that a structure comprising additional sub-regional offices would not serve the region in a manner as is expected in other regions. Instead, the Conference concluded that the region, given the strong connectivity of Bangkok with the rest of the region, would be better served by a regional office.

2. *agreed* that the Regional Office in Bangkok should be strengthened in such a manner as to ensure that the financial and human resources provided for the office would be comparable to those committed for regions that have newly established sub-regional offices.

3. *urged* that decision-making and management authorities be further streamlined and devolved to the Regional Office.

4. *stressed* that additional capacity was required in the Regional Office to place FAO in a position to respond effectively to the increasing demands for technical and policy-related support.

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. *called on* FAO to strengthen collaboration and synergies with regional economic bodies such as ASEAN, SAARC and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and to enhance partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations.

2. *encouraged* the FAO Secretariat to develop and improve the priority framework document through a consultative process involving member countries, FAO country offices in the region, regional organizations, donors and other partners.

3. *agreed* that the regional priority framework should only identify core issues in the region, which would be based around transboundary issues (such as plant pests and animal diseases), issues of common interest (such as climate change adaptation and mitigation), and issues and challenges of particular relevance for the region.

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The twenty-ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 26 to 31 March 2009. The Conference was organized in two parts: a Senior Officers Meeting from 26 to 28 March, and a Ministerial-level Meeting from 30 to 31 March.

2. Representatives from 33 member countries participated in the Conference. Observers from 1 United Nations non-member state, 16 international non-governmental organizations and 5 intergovernmental organizations were in attendance. Representatives of 7 other United Nations organizations also participated. A complete list of Conference participants is given in *Appendix B*.

INAUGURAL CEREMONIES

3. Mr Kinlay Dorjee, Secretary of the twenty-ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, greeted delegates on behalf of the Conference Secretariat.

4. The Senior Officers Meeting was opened with addresses by Mr He Changchui, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO, and His Excellency, Theera Wongsamut, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Royal Government of Thailand.

5. Mr He expressed appreciation to the Royal Government of Thailand for its excellent support in hosting the meeting. Mr He noted that multiple crises affecting the world in the past year, including soaring food prices, the global economic downturn, and climate changes and various natural disasters, had highlighted the importance of agriculture for human well-being and had imparted greater urgency to FAO's mandate. Mr He emphasized that, despite modest progress in hunger reduction, Asia and the Pacific was moving relatively slowly towards ensuring food security for all. Mr He stressed that speeding up progress towards the World Food Summit target of halving the number of undernourished by 2015 remained the biggest challenge and that support to the agricultural sector should not be neglected while dealing with financial and economic crises. Mr He informed delegates of the preparation of a draft concept note on a Regional Priority Framework for the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and invited feedback on the proposed new priority elements for the region.

6. His Excellency, Theera Wongsamut, welcomed delegates and participants to Bangkok on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and formally opened the Senior Officers Meeting. His Excellency stressed the need for collective action to reduce poverty and food insecurity, and to address deforestation, water and air pollution, soil salinity and other forms of natural resources degradation. His Excellency highlighted the importance that Thailand gives to effective water management and the country's efforts to supply water to all farmers and reduce on-farm water loss. His Excellency noted that small-scale irrigation approaches were helping Thailand realize the New Theory of Agriculture and Self-Sufficiency Philosophy of His Majesty the King. His Excellency urged increased cooperation and support among countries in the region to address urgent challenges and achieve common goals in agricultural development.

7. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Ministerial Meeting was held on 30 March. Mr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, warmly welcomed the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Thailand and all participants to the Conference. He appreciated the importance accorded to the meeting, exemplified by the large number of participating ministers and secretaries of agriculture.

8. His Excellency Abhisit Vejjajiva, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Thailand, delivered the inaugural address, indicating that it was not only an honor for Thailand to host the

Conference, but that it also offered an opportunity to reaffirm the country's commitment to the mission of FAO in ensuring each individual has access to food at all times.

9. His Excellency stressed that agriculture remained the most important pillar of development in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region, but that the sector was severely challenged by the rising demands for food and agricultural products, natural and human-induced natural disasters, climate change, environmental and human-induced disasters, ecological degradation, increasing demands for bioenergy and the recent global financial crisis.

10. The Prime Minister pointed out that the global drive towards food security was hampered by protectionist trade policies, which constrain the trade of food and agricultural products. His Excellency urged reduction or elimination of market distortions and early conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda to enable developing countries to benefit from trade in ways that would boost their food security-oriented development.

11. The text of the inaugural address of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is given in *Appendix D*.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSONS, VICE-CHAIRPERSONS AND RAPPORTEURS

12. Delegates unanimously elected Mr Sakchai Sriboonsue, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Royal Thai Government, as Chairperson of the Senior Officers Meeting. They also elected all the heads of delegations of Vice-Ministerial and Secretary of Agriculture rank as Vice-Chairpersons of the Senior Officers Meeting, and Mr C.Q.K. Mustaq Ahmed, of Bangladesh, as Rapporteur.

13. His Excellency Theera Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Royal Government of Thailand, was elected as the Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting. Delegates also elected all the other Ministers present as Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference, and His Excellency Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, of Bangladesh, as Rapporteur of the Conference.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

14. The Conference adopted the agenda, which is given in *Appendix A*. Documents submitted to the Conference are listed in *Appendix C*.

STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

15. In his statement, Mr Jacques Diouf observed that the Regional Conference was taking place at a time when a serious economic and financial crisis that was compounding the world's food insecurity crisis. He noted that mainly because of soaring food prices, the number of hungry people in the world had risen by 115 million in the past two years, bringing the total to nearly one billion humans. Mr Diouf called on governments, donors, financial institutions and world and regional organizations to take urgent and bold measures to unlock agricultural potential and rapidly boost production in the most-affected countries.

16. The Director-General reported that, as part of its "Initiative on Soaring Food Prices", FAO had provided technical expertise and support to 98 countries, including 11 in Asia and 7 in the South Pacific. He further highlighted the importance of addressing complex and fundamental issues, particularly governance, the strengthening of national institutions, support to farmers, official development assistance, increasing the share of national budgets allocated to agriculture, incentives to private investment and effective partnerships.

17. The Director-General emphasized that good agricultural practices would have a major role to play in overcoming the challenges associated with climate change, which will primarily affect poor countries and the small island states.

18. The complete text of the Director-General's statement is given in *Appendix E*.

STATEMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHAIRPERSON OF THE FAO COUNCIL

19. Mr Noori Naeini, Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, addressed the Conference. He reflected on the combined effects of the global financial crisis, volatile food prices, climate change, bioenergy development and a decline in the pace of agricultural productivity gains. Mr Naeini stressed that the main responsibility for dealing with these challenges remained with national governments, with support from FAO and other regional and international partners. Mr Naeini further highlighted ongoing reform efforts in FAO that would accord an enhanced role for the Regional Conference, effectively bringing the regional and sub-regional perspectives much more to the fore in influencing the work of the Organization.

20. Mr Naeini also informed the Conference of the progress made by the Organization in following up the decisions of the 35th (Special) Session of FAO Conference and implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action. He specially referred to the new role of the FAO Regional Conference and stressed the need for decentralization and delegation of authorities to the decentralized offices to improve efficiency.

II. MINISTERIAL-LEVEL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE

21. The Ministerial-level Session of the Conference involved the full delegations of all participating countries and organizations, including 15 Ministers and 12 Vice-Ministers responsible for agriculture.

EMERGING ISSUES AND PRIORITIES ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

22. Mr He Changchui, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, reported on the major FAO activities in the region in the past biennium, in relation to the Millennium Development Goals.¹ Mr He highlighted FAO's efforts to assist member countries in controlling avian influenza and in addressing soaring food prices. While elaborating the comprehensive support provided to the region by FAO through policy studies, consultations and expert meetings, workshops and training, policy advice, technical support for field projects, publication of guidelines and technical reports, and collaboration with national and regional partners, Mr He emphasized that much remained for FAO to do in supporting member countries efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For this reason, there was a need for strengthening FAO's multi-disciplinary capacity in the region, and for FAO to enhance collaboration with member countries and partner organizations.

23. Mr C.Q.K. Mustaq Ahmed, Rapporteur of the Senior Officers Meeting, introduced the report of the Senior Officers Meeting to the Ministerial-level Session and summarized the key findings and recommendations resulting from the deliberations during that portion of the Conference. The Ministers and other delegates approved the findings and recommendations of the Senior Officers Meeting, which comprise an integral part of this Conference report.

24. In validating and reinforcing the conclusions and recommendations made by the senior officers, the Ministers and other delegates noted that many countries in the region had made significant advances in reducing poverty and enhancing food security, but that progress had been slowed or even reversed in some countries as a result of the global financial crisis, soaring food and

¹ APRC/08/5

commodity prices and various natural disasters. The Ministers and delegates renewed their commitment to reduce the number of hungry and poor in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

25. The Ministers and other delegates cited numerous challenges and constraints in the pursuit of food security. Particular attention was drawn to difficulties arising from volatility of food and commodity prices, growing populations and food demand, climate change, water scarcity, degradation of natural resources, market access and associated trade-related challenges, natural and man-made disasters, inadequate rural infrastructure, invasive species and competition for resources related to the production of bioenergy feedstocks.

26. Ministers and delegates were particularly concerned with the negative impacts of climate change on agricultural production and food security. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in formulating and implementing practical adaptation and mitigation strategies, including promotion and exchange of information on appropriate agricultural practices, participatory planting calendars, and research and development on salt-tolerant and drought- and flood-resistant varieties of crops needed to respond to anticipated climate change.

27. The Conference acknowledged that sustainable forest management has important roles to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ministers and delegates emphasized that sustainable forest management encompassed issues related to water management, biodiversity protection, bioenergy development, coastal protection and various opportunities to sequester carbon through sound forest management practices. FAO was *urged* to continue supporting member countries in implementing sustainable forest management, including measures related to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

28. Recognizing the frequency and severity of natural disasters affecting the region, the Conference *encouraged* member countries to develop early warning systems for rapid response to disasters and emergencies. The Conference *requested* FAO to support the development of such early warning systems and to continue assisting countries with disaster preparedness, emergency relief, and long-term post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation, as required.

29. Ministers and delegates highlighted the important role of small-scale farmers in meeting food security objectives and noted the particularly harsh impacts the current economic crisis was having on smallholders and landless farm labourers. The Conference *recommended* that member countries assist such individuals by clarifying land tenure and access to resources, facilitating market access and providing supporting services such as training, extension, credit, and rural infrastructure. The Conference also noted opportunities to support small- and medium-scale enterprises and contract farming to assist market access and improve production standards for smallholders. The Conference also *requested* FAO to assist in promoting practical crop insurance schemes and social safety nets, in particular targeting small farmers.

30. While recognizing the potential for bioenergy to contribute to energy security, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to rural development in terms of creating job opportunities and income generation, the Ministers and delegates cautioned that bioenergy production should not imperil food security or further marginalize the poor. The Conference *urged* FAO to continue its assessment of the opportunities and risks associated with bioenergy development and provide sound and balanced information, policy advice and technical support to member countries. The Conference called special attention to the special needs of small island developing states and developing countries with limited land for a balanced food security and energy security.

31. The Conference encouraged increased regional cooperation in addressing the threats of transboundary animal diseases, which were recognized to be increasing with expanding international trade of livestock and meat products. FAO was *requested* to facilitate regional cooperation and networking, work to harmonize legislation, regulations and control measures, and strengthen biosecurity and other efforts to combat the spread of diseases and invasive species.

32. The Conference noted that capture fisheries and near-shore fisheries are a significant source of food and income for rural people and that the number of households engaging in these activities was increasing. The high dependence of small island developing states (SIDS) upon fisheries was especially evident. The Conference emphasized the need to balance production levels with resource sustainability, and to improve post-harvest infrastructure and market access. FAO was *requested* to support the development of regulatory frameworks and management policies for fisheries, provide technical assistance to meet the emerging traceability requirements of international markets, and support sustainable aquaculture development. The Conference *urged* member countries to implement responsible fishing practices and cooperate in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

33. The Conference appreciated the contribution of open, fair and just trade of food and agricultural products in ensuring stability of prices and enhancing food security. Ministers and delegates cautioned against rising protectionism and non-tariff trade barriers. The Conference welcomed the Aid-for-Trade initiative and efforts to assist producers to meet increasingly stringent standards for food safety and export.

34. Having struggled with highly fluctuating food prices in recent years, the Ministers and delegates *urged* Governments and international organizations to seek mechanisms for reducing the volatility and unpredictability of food and agricultural commodities. The Conference *encouraged* member countries and international organizations, including FAO, to consider the establishment of regional or global food reserves in anticipation of future perturbations.

35. Noting the urgent need to increase investment in the agriculture sector and strengthen agricultural research and extension, the Conference *urged* developed countries to meet commitments they had made to increase development assistance in agriculture in a timely manner, despite the hardships of the current economic downturn.

36. To take full advantage of the wealth of expertise and experience of countries in the region, the Conference *encouraged* expanded collaboration through the South-South cooperation framework. It also *urged* FAO to expand collaboration with relevant regional organizations. The Conference further urged member countries to facilitate and support effective partnerships among development workers at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels to enhance progress towards food security objectives.

37. In recognizing the expanding challenges facing member countries, the Conference *called on* FAO to strengthen the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to provide the necessary resources to serve the needs of the region in a more timely and effective manner. The Conference also *urged* FAO to further streamline and devolve decision-making and management authorities to the Regional Office and to further strengthen the Sub-regional Office for the Pacific. The Conference *requested* FAO to submit a fully formulated Regional Priority Framework for its review and consideration at the next Regional Conference and report on the restructuring and strengthening of the regional office to address these priorities.

38. The Conference welcomed proposals for strengthening the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific and *recommended* enhanced linkages between the Regional Technical Commissions the Regional Conference.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EMERGENCY ISSUES: TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES IN THE REGION AND LOOKING AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECTING ITS OCCURRENCE

39. The Conference considered recent challenges related to transboundary animal diseases in the region, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Peste des Petits (PPR), as well as newly emerging threats.²

40. Delegates noted the urgency in controlling transboundary animal disease threats, highlighted by the fact that 75 percent of infectious agents known to be emerging in human populations are transmitted from animals to humans, as well as their impact on food security and food safety, and their social and economic dimensions.

41. Delegates recognized the need for better understanding of the factors contributing to disease spread and emerging diseases. The Conference *urged* FAO to pursue further multi-disciplinary studies to fully understand the occurrence and spread of emerging diseases.

42. Recognizing the evolving nature of livestock production and increasing risk of diseases, the Conference *requested* FAO to facilitate regional efforts that would lead to harmonizing policies and strategies, common legislation on border control, strengthening veterinary services and development of regional disease outbreak preparedness plans.

43. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in developing surveillance plans for early warning and response to disease outbreaks, strengthening capacity related to epidemiology and economic research, and to explore the technical feasibility of establishing more regional reference laboratories that would meet international standards. In this connection, the Conference noted with appreciation the offers of India and Malaysia to host reference laboratories or related diagnostic facilities.

44. Delegates emphasized the importance of regional collaboration to control transboundary animal diseases. The Conference *requested* FAO to pursue the establishment of regional support units under the Global Framework for the Control and Prevention of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TAD) that would consist of epidemiology and laboratory reference centers to assist countries, especially in times of disease emergencies.

45. The Conference commended FAO for its support to member countries in avian influenza control and appreciated the generous support from donors in addressing the serious challenges related to transboundary animal diseases and welcomed indications of continuing support.

ROUNDTABLE ON THE BIOENERGY RUSH: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR FOOD SECURITY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

46. An informal Ministerial roundtable on bioenergy development, and the associated opportunities and risks for food security, the environment and rural development, was convened on 30 March.³ A note on the roundtable is given in *Appendix F*.

III. POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND TECHNICAL OPTIONS FOR COPING WITH WATER SCARCITY

47. The Conference deliberated on the causes and effects of water scarcity in the region and considered policies, strategies and technical options for coping with water scarcity.⁴ Delegates acknowledged that water scarcity was a particular concern for the region's poor and that growing

² APRC/08/6

³ APRC/08/7

⁴ APRC/08/2

regional water scarcity and competition for water, compounded by the effects of climate change, represented a major threat to future advances in food security and poverty alleviation.

48. Noting that agriculture was by far the major user of water in the region, delegates appreciated that the agriculture sector offered the greatest scope for alleviating water scarcity. Delegates recognized that irrigated areas and water consumption by agriculture would need to increase further to meet rising demand for food and industrial goods. The sector was thus under severe pressure to account for the water it uses and perform with progressively smaller allocations. Delegates noted however that, while agriculture could be a major factor of physical water scarcity, inequitable access to water services was also prevalent.

49. The Conference *encouraged* member countries to develop systemic national responses to water scarcity that address policy, institutional, legal, economic and technical obstacles, adopt more effective and strategically focused investment strategies in water management, assess the potential of international trade to offset water scarcity, and enhance regional cooperation.

50. Delegates agreed that, while supply-side responses were still an option in some basins, managing demand for agricultural water use should be the priority in the region. The Conference *encouraged* member countries to focus on water-use efficiency and agricultural productivity along the value chain from farm to market, including on-farm water management, irrigation system performance, improved governance and adjustments of national water and irrigation policies.

51. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in developing comprehensive policy and strategic frameworks for coping with water scarcity focusing in particular on: (i) improving water governance at the level of communities, irrigation systems, river basins and aquifers; (ii) adopting multi-sectoral strategic planning approaches related to food security, agriculture, water, environment and investment; (iii) adopting demand-driven and service-oriented irrigation development and management; (iv) modernizing irrigation systems; (v) enhancing water productivity in rainfed and irrigated production systems while maintaining environmental protection; (vi) developing and adopting improved on-farm water management including water-saving practices; (vii) safeguarding vulnerable agro-ecosystems and populations, such as those in tropical deltas and in arid or semi-arid areas; and (viii) addressing land tenure and land titling issues and access to natural resources to create a more conducive environment for investment and sustainable use of land and water resources.

52. The Conference *encouraged* member countries to boost the productivity of rainfed agriculture by providing incentives for the adoption of practices that minimize water risks, such as water harvesting, and by developing and promoting the use of seeds tolerant to flooding, salinity and drought.

53. The Conference *recommended* that member countries implement service-oriented reforms of irrigation institutions and adopt demand-driven irrigation modernization strategies focusing on cost-effective water service delivery, while recognizing multiple uses and services of agricultural water and extending participatory management to various local actors.

54. Delegates recognized the need for significant new investments in irrigation systems and *encouraged* member countries to support such investment by strengthening capacity at all levels and adopting benchmarking systems to monitor the effects of policy change and performance improvements in the irrigation sector. The Conference *requested* FAO to scale up its regional irrigation modernization programme in support of these efforts.

55. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in promoting conservation agriculture, integrated pest management, integrated plant nutrition, sustainable forest management, best practices in livestock production, more efficient processing and marketing processes, water treatment facilities for industrial and marketing complexes, and other measures to conserve and

protect water resources and water quality, *inter alia* to protect inland fisheries, aquatic resources and aquaculture.

56. Delegates noted the increased attention being given to the provision of ecosystem services through sound management of watersheds and other ecosystems, and recognized that the burden for maintaining such services often was borne by poor rural communities. The Conference noted that some countries were developing mechanisms for the compensation of providers of environmental services, and encouraged others to consider such approaches, as appropriate.

57. The Conference *encouraged* member countries to develop and report reliable information on agricultural water use, facilitate effective dialogue among key water sector interests, establish robust and transparent methods to negotiate allocation amongst competing water uses and users, and address institutional, technological and economic obstacles constraining progress towards optimal intra- and inter-sectoral water allocations. The Conference *requested* FAO to strengthen AQUASTAT in the region.

58. The Conference *requested* FAO, in collaboration with other relevant organizations, to continue facilitating regional and international dialogue on water scarcity issues and transboundary cooperation in the management of water resources. It *urged* FAO to support the establishment of regional networks of experts, including civil society organizations, to facilitate the sharing of knowledge (including traditional knowledge), information, experiences, technologies and best practices related to water management and approaches for coping with water scarcity.

59. The Conference *supported* the launch of a regional initiative on re-inventing irrigation and agricultural water governance in Asia and the Pacific, with a goal of enhancing water management at all levels through knowledge sharing, capacity building and implementation.

60. Delegates recognized that many farmers and water users will need to adapt practices to meet the challenges of climate change and water scarcity, and appreciated the value of participatory planting calendars as a practical tool to support such adaptation. The Conference *requested* FAO to support the development of practical adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change in the region.

61. The Conference *encouraged* FAO to collaborate with regional centers of excellence, such as the Asia Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, to develop and promote appropriate and affordable water management technologies and mechanization for effective on-farm water management.

62. The Conference *urged* FAO to give high priority to assisting member countries in developing policies, strategies and capacities for coping with water scarcity, and to strengthen its own capacity and resources, accordingly, in the Regional Office, and also in headquarters.

IV. AGRIBUSINESS AND COMPETITIVE AGRO-INDUSTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION AND FREE TRADE

63. The Conference considered emerging trends related to agribusiness and the increasingly competitive nature of agro-industries in the context of globalization and free trade.⁵

64. Delegates noted that food and agricultural systems in Asia and the Pacific were rapidly becoming more market-driven – with greater reliance on input markets and growth of post-production enterprises, increasing roles for the private sector and growing commercialization of smallholder

⁵ APRC/08/3

farming. The Conference appreciated that agribusiness and agro-industry were thus having increasing impacts on food security, and economic and social development in the region.

65. Delegates also recognized that changes in agri-food systems were being driven by rising incomes *per capita*, technological advances, trade liberalization and urbanization. These driving forces were leading to greater demand for high-value commodities, processed products and pre-prepared foods, and more meat, fish and fruit products. These factors, in turn, presented new opportunities and challenges, especially for small-scale producers and small agro-enterprises.

66. Governments were responding to these changes with various policy and programme reforms and increased investments designed to accelerate the pace of agri-business and agro-industry development. Governments, agro-industries and producers were making institutional and organizational changes, at all levels of the value chain, designed to expand primary commodity production.

67. The Conference *encouraged* member countries to further support agri-business and agro-industry development, where appropriate, by reforming policies and strengthening institutions, clarifying legal and regulatory frameworks, fostering public-private cooperation, enhancing the roles of local organizations, reviewing institutional mandates, and balancing the pace and nature of agro-industry development with poverty and food security objectives.

68. The Conference *urged* FAO to: (i) conduct inter-ministerial dialogues to identify priority actions for fostering the development of agro-industries; (ii) encourage public-private partnerships for strengthening business and entrepreneurial skills of smallholders and accelerate their inclusion into value chains; and (iii) support the development of environments that enable smallholder involvement in, and benefit from, sustainable agro-industries.

69. The Conference *recommended* that FAO continue promoting agro-industries and value chains that deliver benefits to smallholder farmers and small agro-enterprises by assisting member countries to improve services to agro-industries, promoting practices that add value for small farmers, and helping small farmers respond to changing markets and consumer requirements.

70. Recognizing that the proliferation of industry standards and food quality requirements stretched the capacity of small farmers and producers and limited their access to markets, the Conference *urged* FAO to work with member countries to build capacity among small producers for meeting industry standards and requirements.

71. Appreciating that access to credit was critically important for small producers and small agri-businesses to develop and compete successfully, the Conference *urged* member countries to support the development of practical micro-finance and credit schemes for small-scale agro-industries and their suppliers.

72. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in their efforts to: (i) analyze trends and characteristics of agri-food, agro-industry and value chains; (ii) establish information and knowledge management systems related to agribusiness and agro-industries; (iii) review and revise, as appropriate, agribusiness and agro-industry policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, institutions and services; and (iv) assess market and agribusiness opportunities with a view towards prioritizing specific agro-industries and value chains for development.

73. The Conference emphasized the importance of targeting smallholder farmers as primary beneficiaries of assistance for agro-industries and agri-business development. The importance of ensuring sustainability of agro-industries was also highlighted. The Conference stressed that smallholder farmers, along with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, should be more actively involved in policy development.

V. AID-FOR-TRADE INITIATIVE AND THE ROLE OF FAO

74. The Conference was informed of the Aid-for-Trade initiative created through the Declaration of the Sixth World Trade Organization (WTO) Conference in 2005, and considered ways in which FAO could assist member countries in effectively operationalizing the initiative.⁶

75. Delegates were reminded that the Aid-for-Trade initiative is aimed at assisting developing countries to build supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure essential for expanding trade and benefiting from trade agreements. As agriculture continues to be a dominant sector for many developing countries, delegates recognized the potential for increased agricultural trade to alleviate poverty and food insecurity.

76. The Conference *recommended* that FAO continue to collaborate with the WTO and other development partners in elaborating the Aid-for-Trade initiative for the agricultural sector, and urged FAO to play a lead role in facilitating the implementation of the initiative in the area of agriculture. In this connection, bilateral cooperation and assistance on capacities building in the region was also noted and encouraged.

77. The Conference *requested* FAO to assist member countries in prioritizing activities under the initiative, preparing investment proposals, and implementing country and regionally focused trade-related activities. It was stressed that prioritization should be country-specific and demand-driven and trade policy should be mainstreamed with broader national policies, plans and strategies for development, poverty reduction, food security and trade.

78. The Conference *urged* FAO to: (i) continue to provide assistance to member countries on the ongoing Doha Round negotiations; (ii) re-orient and expand work to cover the growing needs for information and assistance on regional and bilateral trade negotiations and their implementation; and (iii) undertake studies and analyses, including those on best practices, to enable member countries to adopt appropriate trade policies and Aid-in-Trade measures that enhance the contribution of trade to agricultural development, equitable distribution of benefits, sustainable food security and poverty reduction.

VI. REGIONAL STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

79. The Conference was briefed on the regional state of food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific.⁷ Delegates noted with concern that the number of undernourished people in the region had increased in recent years. Rising food prices and the financial crisis had seriously aggravated food insecurity in Asia and the Pacific, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the world's undernourished population. The disturbingly high numbers of undernourished and the persistence of food insecurity in South Asia were cause for particular concern.

80. Delegates were pleased to note that the ratio of rice stocks to utilization in 2009 was expected to increase to 26 percent. Despite this improvement and an anticipated sustained moderate rise in production in coming years, the region could again face upward pressure on food prices, especially if biofuels production is accelerated in response to renewed price increases for fossil fuels. The Conference agreed that the most effective response to the recent and potential rise in food prices should be to ensure long-term investment in productivity-enhancing measures to increase food supplies and ease the pressure on the natural resource base.

81. The Conference noted that dietary patterns and consumption habits were changing rapidly in the region – driven by income growth, rapid urbanization and lifestyle changes. The *per capita*

⁶ APRC/08/4

⁷ APRC/08/INF/5

consumption of cereals was on the decline while the consumption of protein-rich foods such as meat was increasing rapidly.

82. Delegates recognized that biotechnology offers considerable opportunities for improving agricultural productivity and that the private sector has an important role to play in its development and application. However, these require comprehensive bio-security frameworks and safeguards at national and regional levels.

83. The Conference acknowledged that crop, livestock and fish production and excessive use of chemicals and fertilizers can have profound effects on the wider environment and agreed that more sustainable methods of production and intensification are needed to minimize or reverse these negative impacts.

84. Climate change was recognized as a particular threat to food security and the natural resource base in the region, requiring regional and international collaboration, adjustments in policies, and enhanced capacity building programmes to support mitigation and adaptation.

85. Delegates recognized the need for governments to renew efforts to develop well-functioning markets, clearly define property rights, improve natural resource management, and improve rural education, health services, infrastructure and agricultural research and extension in order to achieve sustainable rural development, reduce poverty and enhance food security.

86. Delegates recognized the benefits of increased involvement of all stakeholders concerned with agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries in discussions and negotiations related to the sector. It was noted that much of the discussion regarding biodiversity, climate change and bioenergy and desertification was taking place without effective participation of the agriculture sector. The Conference welcomed suggestions that member countries pursue integrated planning and policy development among all relevant agencies, the private sector and civil society, and ensure that the interests of agriculture were well represented in regional and international negotiations related to, and affecting, the sector.

87. Delegates welcomed the release of the 2008 edition of the *Regional State of Food and Agriculture* and appreciated the wealth of information and data it contained. Several suggestions were made for further improving future issues of the publication, including gender-disaggregated data, highlights of best practices, and more care in presenting projections.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

88. The Conference was informed, for the first time, of the work of the five FAO Regional Technical Commissions that have secretariats based in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.⁸ These regional technical commissions cover the areas of agricultural statistics, fisheries, forestry, plant protection and animal production and health. The commissions are officially comprised of FAO member countries, primarily from within the region, but commission sessions and activities increasingly involve regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and representatives from the private sector.

89. In recent years, the regional commissions covered a wide range of work, but principally focused on policy development, review and documentation of best practices, assessments of resource

⁸ APRC/08/INF/6

status and capacity building. Normative work included the development and promotion of regional standards and contribution to global agreements and instruments.

90. The Conference appreciated the work of the Regional Technical Commissions and recognized that they play important coordinating and policy roles in the region. Member countries valued the Regional Technical Commissions and encouraged them to continue their activities, working in close collaboration with other regional bodies and national institutions to avoid duplication.

91. The Conference was informed that the recent FAO reform documents had emphasized enhanced roles for the FAO Regional Conferences, as part of FAO's governing bodies, but that the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) report did not provide specific guidance on how the Regional Technical Commissions could be strengthened or enhanced under the FAO reform process.

92. Delegates recognized the opportunity for the FAO Regional Technical Commissions to forge closer linkages with the Regional Conference by giving more thorough consideration of the findings, recommendations and activities of the commissions. The Conference welcomed the suggestion that the work of the FAO Regional Technical Commissions could become a more substantive agenda item in future sessions of the Regional Conference.

VIII. FOOD SAFETY AND TRADE IN ASIA-PACIFIC

93. The Conference was informed of recent issues of food safety in relation to trade within and beyond the Asia-Pacific region, including implications for public health in the region.⁹

94. The Conference recognized the need to strengthen national food-control systems, improve the coordination of food safety activities from farm-to-table and generally raise awareness of the importance of food safety. The Conference acknowledged that adoption of a food chain approach is crucial for promoting food safety and protecting consumers from food-borne diseases. It was highlighted that national food control systems be risk-based and preventive in nature.

95. The Conference noted that food safety issues were receiving increased attention in Asia and the Pacific following the increase in trade in food and agricultural products and the introduction of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) agreements.

96. Delegates acknowledged, however, that for many countries in Asia and the Pacific SPS measures impede trade because the countries concerned are experiencing difficulties in obtaining information and complying with the measures. The Conference cautioned that food safety measures should not be utilized as an excuse in trade protection.

97. The Conference noted that the most significant trends in the regulatory system influencing exporters from the Asia-Pacific region include: (i) adoption of more stringent food safety standards; (ii) growing use of risk analysis as a basis for food-safety regulation; (iii) increased recognition of biosecurity as a strategic and integrated approach to analyzing and managing risks to human, animal and plant life, and health and associated risks to the environment; and (iv) adoption of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system as a basis for new regulations and as a complement of the application of good hygienic and manufacturing practices.

98. Delegates agreed that regional collaboration and cooperation, such as that supported through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), was crucial in addressing existing and emerging food safety issues.

⁹ APRC/08/INF/7

99. Delegates recognized that one of the most significant challenges faced by the public sector in relation to food safety was the rapid proliferation of private standards for food quality and safety established by retailers, food industry, agri-business firms and others. They noted that the implementation of private standards have both positive and negative impacts on actors along the supply chain.

100. The Conference appreciated the capacity building work of FAO in the area of food safety and welcomed FAO's intention to strengthen its technical assistance to member countries and regional organizations in the area of food safety, including collaboration in the transfer of technology.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

101. The Conference considered a proposal by the Asia Group for strengthening the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP), which had been developed in the course of considering various options for FAO reform and decentralization.

102. The Conference unanimously *supported* the view that a structure comprising additional sub-regional offices would not serve the region in a manner as is expected in other regions. Instead, the Conference concluded that the region, given the strong connectivity of Bangkok with the rest of the region, would be better served by a regional office.

103. The Conference strongly *agreed* that the Regional Office in Bangkok should be strengthened in such a manner as to ensure that the financial and human resources provided for the office would be comparable to those committed for regions that have newly established sub-regional offices. The Conference further urged that decision-making and management authorities be further streamlined and devolved to the Regional Office.

104. Delegates highlighted the significant challenges and specific needs in the Asia-Pacific region that underscored the call for strengthening the Regional Office, including the fact that the majority of the world's poor and undernourished lived in Asia and the Pacific. The Conference stressed that additional capacity was required in the Regional Office to place FAO in a position to respond effectively to the increasing demands for technical and policy-related support.

105. Recognizing that FAO country offices provide the most immediate link between member countries and FAO, delegates also expressed their view that, in the course of further decentralization, efforts should be made to provide additional resources to strengthen FAO country offices in the region.

106. Delegates *called on* FAO to strengthen collaboration and synergies with regional economic bodies such as ASEAN, SAARC and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and to enhance partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations.

107. The representative of the ASEAN Secretariat announced that a series of actions would be taken to follow up the ASEAN Summit Statement on Food Security in the ASEAN region. The representative invited FAO, as the lead UN agency for food security, to provide expert support and cooperation to these initiatives, including a role in co-organizing a meeting for planners and decision-makers on food security in mid-2009.

108. The Conference was informed of a draft concept note on RAP priority framework, which was initiated by RAP with the aim of translating the FAO Strategic Framework into regional actions, following the IEE recommendations and the Conference decision on the Medium Term Plan and the

Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) for 2010-2011. Delegates expressed appreciation of this initiative and provided initial feedback on the draft concept note.

109. The Conference considered that such a regional priority framework was necessary to characterize regional needs for focused actions by FAO. The Conference encouraged the Secretariat to develop and improve the priority framework document through a consultative process involving member countries, FAO country offices in the region, regional organizations, donors and other partners. Delegates made various suggestions for improving the focus and providing additional coverage of the priority framework. The Conference agreed that the regional priority framework should only identify core issues in the region, which would be based around transboundary issues (such as plant pests and animal diseases), issues of common interest (such as climate change adaptation and mitigation), and issues and challenges of particular relevance for the region. The regional priority framework should also include implementation strategies, such as partnerships, expert panels, financial mechanisms and capacity building approaches. The Conference agreed that a completed regional priority framework would be presented to the next Regional Conference for its consideration and endorsement.

X. CONCLUDING ITEMS

PROPOSED ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE THIRTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

110. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative referred to the decision of the FAO Conference, as reflected in the Immediate Plan of Action, with regard to the future Regional Conference which would become a part of FAO's governing bodies. Mr He further outlined the procedures for identification of agenda items for the next session of the Conference, including seeking advice from the Asia-Pacific Group, consultation among FAO staff in the regional and sub-regional offices and in headquarters, and final approval by the Director-General.

111. Numerous suggestions were offered for consideration as potential agenda items for the Thirtieth Session, in broad categories related to prioritizing of FAO's work and activities (including consideration of a fully formulated regional priority framework), strengthening of FAO's capacity to assist member countries in the region, and various technical topics, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster preparedness and mitigation, food security and livelihood of small farmers, livestock and dairy development, critical assessment of biotechnology, improving agricultural productivity through improved services and inputs, sustainable natural resources management, and data and information sharing. Suggestions were also made related to the conduct of future Regional Conferences, including the desire to provide more time for consideration and discussion of substantive agenda items.

112. In light of the evolving modalities and roles of the Regional Conference, and recognizing the rapidity with which conditions and circumstances change, it was suggested that further discussion and consultation be conducted through direct and enhanced communication networks among member countries, including identifying country contact points for the member governments which are not presented in Rome to enable them to interact with the Rome-based Asia-Pacific Group, before finalization of the agenda for the Thirtieth Session.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE THIRTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

113. The Government of the Republic of Korea graciously reconfirmed to the Conference its offer to host the Thirtieth Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in 2010, in the Republic of Korea.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

114. The Conference unanimously adopted the report as presented by the Rapporteur.

CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE

115. On behalf of the Royal Government of Thailand, His Excellency Theera Wongsamut thanked the participants for their constructive and positive contributions, which had contributed to the Conference's success. In closing the Conference, he noted that it had advanced the common understanding of the strategies, policies and actions needed to reduce hunger and ensure sustainable rural development throughout the region.

116. Participants expressed their heartfelt appreciation to the people and Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements in hosting the Conference.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA****SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING**

26 – 27 March 2009

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Senior Officers Meeting
2. Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Policies, strategies and technical options for coping with water scarcity
5. Agribusiness and competitive agro-industries in the context of globalization and free trade
6. Aid for trade initiative and the role of FAO

III. INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Regional State of Food and Agriculture
8. Recommendations and activities of the regional commissions
9. Food safety and trade in Asia-Pacific

IV. OTHER MATTERS

10. Any other business

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting
12. Closure of the Senior Officers Meeting

PLENARY SESSION

30 – 31 March 2009

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
6. Global and regional emergency issues: Transboundary animal diseases in the region and looking at the environmental factors affecting their occurrence
7. Round Table on the bioenergy rush: Opportunities and risks for food security, the environment and rural development

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8. Emerging issues and priorities on food and agricultural development in the region
9. Report on FAO activities in the region with a focus on the achievement of the MDGs
10. Report of the Senior Officers Meeting

IV. OTHER MATTERS

11. Proposed items to be considered for the Thirtieth Regional Conference

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

12. Date and place of the Thirtieth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
13. Adoption of the Report (including the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting)
14. Closure of the Conference

APPENDIX B

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

MINISTERIAL MEETING

Chairperson:	Theera WONGSAMUT (Thailand)
Vice-Chairpersons	Muhammad Abdur RAZZAQUE (Bangladesh) Pema GYAMTSHO (Bhutan) Joketani COKANASIGA (Fiji) Anton APRIYANTONO (Indonesia) Tetabo NAKARA (Kiribati) Htay OO (Myanmar) Frederick W. PITCHER (Nauru) Jaya Prakash Prasad GUPTA (Nepal) Nazar Mohammad GODAL (Pakistan) Taua Tavaga Kitiona SEUALA (Samoa) Maithripala SIRISENA (Sri Lanka) Hon Tavau TEII (Tuvalu) Havo MOLISALE (Vanuatu)
Rapporteur	Muhammad Abdur RAZZAQUE (Bangladesh)
Independent Chair of the FAO Council:	Mohammad Saeid Noori NAEINI

SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING

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Vice-Chairpersons	Muhammad Abdur RAZZAQUE (Bangladesh) Niumaia TABUNAKAWAI (Fiji) T. Nanda KUMAR (India) Tarsu MURDOCH (Kiribati) Sunimal SENARATNE (Sri Lanka) Havo MOLISALE (Vanuatu) Bui Ba BONG (Viet Nam)
Rapporteur	C.Q.K. Mustaq AHMED (BANGLADESH)
Independent Chair of the FAO Council:	Mohammad Saeid Noori NAEINI

MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION**AFGHANISTAN**

Delegate: **Abdul Ghani GHURIANI**
Director-General
Policy and Planning
Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock

AUSTRALIA

Delegate: **Dominic PYNE**
Counselor (Agriculture)
Embassy of Australia in Thailand

BANGLADESH

Delegate: **Muhammad Abdur RAZZAQUE**
Minister
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Alternates: **Mustafa KAMAL**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Bangladesh to Thailand

C.Q.K. Mustaq AHMED
Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture

Zahirul HAQUE
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Mosharraf HOSSAIN
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

Eakub ALI
Economic Minister
Embassy of Bangladesh in Thailand

Toufique HASAN
First Secretary
Embassy of Bangladesh in Thailand

BHUTAN

Delegate: **Pema GYAMTSHO**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternates: **Chencho NORBU**
Director
Ministry of Agriculture

Karma GALEY
Private Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture

CAMBODIA

Delegate: **San VANTY**
Under Secretary of State
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Alternate: **Neou KOMPEAK**
Chief of Agricultural Asian Unit
Department of International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

CHINA

Delegate: **Zhang YUXIANG**
Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternates: **Yao XIANGJUN**
Deputy Director-General, Department of International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture

Luo MING
Director
Department of International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture

Wang JINCHEN
Division Director, Department of Science and Education
Ministry of Agriculture

Song JUNXIA
Deputy Division Director, Bureau of Veterinary
Ministry of Agriculture

Zhao LIJUN
Programme Officer
Department of International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture

Zhang XIJUN
Interpreter
Ministry of Agriculture

COOK ISLANDS

Delegate: **Robert WIGMORE**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternate: **Anthony BROWN**
Chief Advisor to Minister

Ministry of Agriculture

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Delegate: **O Yong SON**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Thailand

Alternates: **Pak CHUN IL**
Coordinator
National Committee for FAO

Rim Song CHOL
Member
National Committee for FAO

Jong Sun WON
Counselor and Permanent Representative to UN
Embassy of Democratic People's Republic of Korea

FIJI

Delegate: **Joketani COKANASIGA**
Minister
Ministry of Primary Industries

Alternates: **Richard BEYER**
Permanent Secretary Department of Agriculture
Ministry of Primary Industries

Niumaia TABUNAKAWAI
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Fisheries and Forests

FRANCE

Delegate: **Maurice SIVETON**
Regional Counselor for Cooperation
Embassy of France in Thailand

Alternates: **Antonin COEUR-BIZOT**
Assistant to Regional Counselor for Cooperation
Embassy of France in Thailand

Caroline Isle de BEAUCHAINE
Sectoral Attaché Agriculture and Food
Embassy of France in Thailand

INDIA

Delegate: **T. Nanda KUMAR**
Secretary
Department of Agriculture and Cooperation

Alternates: **R. PARASURAM**
Minister (Agriculture)

Embassy of India, Rome, Italy

S.K. BANDYOPADHYAY

Animal Husbandry Commissioner
Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture

Sanjay Vikram SINGH

Director (International Cooperation)
Department of Agriculture and Cooperation

Dheeraj BHASKAR

Attache and APR to UNESCAP
Embassy to India, Bangkok

Vijaya Latha REDDY

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of India in Thailand

INDONESIA

Delegate:

Anton APRIYANTONO

Minister
Department of Agriculture

Alternates:

Mohammad HATTA

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Indonesia in Thailand

Mohamad OEMAR

Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of FAO
Embassy of Indonesia in Italy

Maryani ATMOSUWARNO

Third Secretary
Economic Affairs
Assistant Permanent Representative of Indonesia to UNESCAP

Achmad SURYANA

Director General
Agency for Food Security
Ministry of Agriculture

Yusni Emilia HARAHAHAP

Advisor to the Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Lukman BAGA

Special Staff to the Minister for Agricultural Economy
Ministry of Agriculture

Farid Hasan BAKTIR

Director of International Cooperation Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture

Tahlim SUDARYANTO

Director of Centre for Agricultural Policy and
Socio-Economy Analysis
Ministry of Agriculture

Asianto SINAMBELA

Director for Trade, Industry, Investment and
Intellectual Property Rights
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Turni Rusil SJAMSUDIN

Director of Veterinary Public Health
Department of Agriculture

Suryadi MUNIR ABDUL

Director of International Trade
Ministry of Agriculture

Hilman NUGROHO

Director of Planning Bureau
Ministry of Forestry

Syafril FAUZI

Secretary Directorate General of Fisheries Product Processing
and Marketing (DGFPPA)
Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries

Purnomo CHANDRA

Counsellor
Embassy of Indonesia in Italy

Erizal SODIKIN

Agricultural Attache
Representative to FAO, IFAD, WFP
Embassy of Indonesia in Italy

Krishna DJELANI

Counsellor of Economic Affairs
Embassy of Indonesia in Thailand

Nana YULIANA

First Secretary
Embassy of Indonesia in Thailand

Noorman EFFENDI

Head of Food and Estate Crops Commodities Section
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MURDIYONO

Head of Budgeting Program Section
Department of Forestry

Kadim MARTANA

Section Head of UNO
Centre of International Cooperation
Ministry of Forestry

Mirah Ratna Dewi SAGUNG

Head of Sub Division
International Cooperation Bureau for Food and Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture

Bambang SUGIHARTO

Head of Food Access Section
Ministry of Agriculture

Erwin DWIYANA

Head of Sub-Division
Programme Cooperation (DGFPPM)
Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries

Charles SOMARA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

Delegate: **Javad TAVAKOLIAN**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Embassy of Iran in Italy

Alternates: **Mahmoud KANI JOOYABAD**
Counselor
Embassy of Iran in Thailand

JAPAN

Delegate: **Taku ETOH**
Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Alternates: **Masahiko SUNEYA**
Director
International Cooperation Division
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Hiroshi NAKAMURA

Official of International Cooperation Division
Minister's Secretariat
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Shigeto IKEDA

Official of International Cooperation Division
Minister's Secretariat
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Manabu MASUO

Deputy Director
Rural Environment Division
Rural Development Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Toru GOMI

Deputy Director
Economic Security Division
Economic Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Hitomi SATO

Chief of International Cooperation Division
International Affairs Department
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Yuichi OTSUKA

Secretary to the Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)

Masahide HIROKAWA

First Secretary
Embassy of Japan in Thailand

Tatae OIE

Interpreter

KIRIBATI**Delegate:**

Tetabo NAKARA
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternates:

Beenna TIANETI
Deputy Director of Agriculture
Ministry of Environments, Lands and Agricultural Development

Tarsu MURDOCH

Secretary
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**Delegate:**

Ty PHOMMASACK
Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Alternate:

Kham SANATEM
Deputy Director-General

National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Phouthone SOPHATHILATH
Deputy Director
Planning and Cooperation Division
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

MALAYSIA

Delegate: **Datuk Rohani ABDUL KARIM**
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry

Alternates: **Mokhtar ISMAIL**
Secretary General
Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry

Abd Aziz JAMLUDDIN
Director-General
Department of Veterinary Services

Yeoh GIM BEE
Undersecretary
Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry

Ariffin TAWANG
Deputy Director-General of MARDI

Sulaiman Md ZAIN
Deputy Director-General
Department of Agriculture

Zuraini HARUN
Assistant Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry

Namimah MOHD HASHIM
Ministry of Plantation
Industries and Commodities

Shamsul Akbar SULAIMAN
Agriculture Counselor
Embassy of Malaysia in Bangkok

Boniface Basin NYIROB
Second Secretary, Agriculture Office
Embassy of Malaysia in Bangkok

MONGOLIA

Delegate: **Luvsandoo DASHPUREV**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Mongolia

Alternate: **Oyu VASHA**
Second Secretary and Deputy Permanent Representative to UNESCAP
Embassy of Mongolia

MYANMAR

Delegate: **Htay OO**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI)

Alternates: **Aung THEIN**
Ambassador
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Thailand

Tin HTUT OO
Director General
Department of Agricultural Planning
Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI)

Tin HTUT
Deputy-Director
Department of Agricultural Planning
Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI)

Ohn WINN
Pro-Rector
University of Forestry
Ministry of Forestry

Ye AUNG
Deputy Director
Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries

Aye Aye MU
Minister Counsellor/DCM
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar

Aung SOE
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Thailand

NAURU

Delegate: **Frederick W. PITCHER**
Minister
Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment

NEPAL

Delegate: **Jaya Prakash Prasad GUPTA**

Minister
Ministry for Agriculture and Cooperatives

Alternate: **Lakshman Kumar POKHAREL**
Chief, Administrative Division
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

PAKISTAN

Delegate: **Nazar Mohammad GODAL**
Minister
Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Alternate: **Amjad NAZIR**
Joint Secretary
International Cooperation (IC)
Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Ahmed Amjad ALI
Charge d' Affaires
Embassy of Pakistan in Thailand

Syed Zafar ALI
Comercial Counsellor
Embassy of Pakistan

PHILIPPINES

Delegate: **Segfredo R. SERRANO**
Under Secretary
Department of Agriculture

Alternates: **Noel DE LUNA**
Agricultural Attache
Deputy Permanent Prerepresentative to FAO
Embassy of the Philippines in Italy

Maria Lourdes SALCEDO
Director
Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations
Department of Foreign Affairs

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Delegate: **Young-Je HA**
Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternates: **Keon-Soo SOHN**
Director
General Division of International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Choun-Keun PARK
Deputy Director
General Division of International Cooperation

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Ji Wan YOON

Assistant Manager
Department of International Cooperation

Ji-Hye PARK

Interpreter

SAMOA

Delegate: **Taua Tavaga Kitiona SEUALA**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture

Alternate: **Kirifi POUONO**
Chief Executive Officer
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Delegate: **Alfred MAESULIA**
Under Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

SRI LANKA

Delegate: **Maithripala SIRISENA**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture Development and Agrarian Services

Alternates: **Sunimal SENARATNE**
Secretary
Ministry of Livestock Development

Lalith HATHURUSINGHE
Director (Projects)
Ministry of Agriculture Development and Agrarian Services

W. Kumara DE SILVA
Director (Livestock Development)
Ministry of Livestock Development

J. A. T. P. GUNAWARDENA
Director
Socio-Economics & Planning Centre
Department of Agriculture

C. PATHIRAJA
Chairman
National Livestock Development Board

THAILAND

Delegate: **Theera WONGSAMUT**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC)

Alternate:**Jarantada KARNASUTA**

Permanent Secretary
Office of Permanent Secretary (MOAC)

Sakchai SRIBOONSUE

Deputy Permanent Secretary and Secretary-General
National FAO Committee (MOAC)

Apichart JONGSKUL

Secretary-General
Office of Agricultural Economics
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Yukol LIMLEAMTHONG

Director-General
Livestock Development Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Metanee SUKONTARUG

Secretary General
National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Somchai CHARNNARONGKUL

Director-General
Department of Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Apichai CHINGPRAPA

Deputy Director-General
Department of Agricultural Extension
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Montol JEAMCHAREON

Deputy Secretary-General
Office of Agricultural Economics
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Vira VONGSANGNAK

Deputy Director-General
Royal Irrigation Department
Ministry of Agriculture

Isra SUNTHORNVUT

Deputy Secretary General
to the Prime Minister for Political Affairs

Tritaporn KHOMAPAT

Minister (Agriculture)
and Permanent Representative of Thailand to FAO
Royal Thai Embassy, Rome

Ampa PINTUKANOK

Director
International Cooperation for Natural Resources and Environment Bureau
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Ronacha JUANGPHANICH
Senior Veterinary Officer
Livestock Development Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Somkiat PRAJAMWONG
Professional Engineer for Planning
Royal Irrigation Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Doungatai DANVIVATHANA
Director
Bureau of Foreign Agricultural Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Sunisa BOONYAPATIPAK
Chief, Foreign Relations Sub-Division
Department of Agricultural Extension
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Kraisid TONTISIRIN
Senior Advisor
Institute of Nutrition
Mahidol University

Thammarat WANGLEE
Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives

TONGA

Delegate: **Lisiate'Aloveita'AKOLO**
Acting Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries
and Minister of Labor, Commerce and Industries

Alternate: **Vailala Scone MATOTO**
Deputy Director
Ministry of Agriculture & Food, Forestry and Fisheries

TUVALU

Delegate: **Hon Tavau TEII**
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Natural Resources & Environment

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Delegate: **Gary MEYER**
Agricultural Counselor
Embassy of the United States of America in Thailand

Alternate: **Corey PICKELSIMER**

Agricultural Attache
Embassy of the United States of America in Thailand

VANUATU

Delegate: **Havo MOLISALE**
Minister
Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries

Alternates: **Pikioune ANTOINE**
First Political Advisor
Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries

Jeffery WILFRED
Director-General
Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine, Forestry and Fisheries

VIET NAM

Delegate: **Bui Ba BONG**
Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

Alternates: **Trang Hieu DUNG**
Director of Department of Planning – Project-Director
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

Nguyen THI TUYET HOA
Deputy Director-General
International Cooperation Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

Bui Chi KIEN
Program Officer
International Co-operation Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

Bui Quang MINH
Senior Officer
International Organizations Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

OBSERVERS FROM UNITED NATIONS NON-MEMBER STATES**HOLY SEE**

Delegate: **Monsignor Renato VOLANTE**
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to FAO
Vatican City

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND
SPECIALISED AGENCIES****IAEA**

Qu LIANG
Director
Joint FAO/IAEA Division
Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications
International Atomic Energy Agency in Austria

ITU

EUN-JU-KIM
Head
Regional Office
Telecommunication Development Bureau

UNEP

Dechen TSERING
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Environment Programme in Thailand

UNESCAP

Sarah LOWDER
Associate Economic Affairs Officer
Social Protection and Social Justice Section
Social Development Division
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand

UNDP

Nicholas ROSELLINI
Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director
Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP)
United Nations Development Programme in Thailand

WHO

Maureen E. BIRMINGHAM
WHO Representative to Thailand & Team Leader
Department of Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Response (CSR)
WHO SEARO, Sub-Unit-Bangkok

WFP

Michael SHEINKMAN
Senior Regional Programme Advisor

OBSERVERS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

(i) Intergovernmental Organizations with formal relations with FAO

Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Suriyan VICHITLEKARN
Senior Officer
Bureau for Economic Integration and Finance
ASEAN Secretariat

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Katsuji MATSUNAMI
Advisor and Practice Leader
Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development
Asian Development Bank

Islamic Development Bank (IDB)

Mohamoud A. GULAID
Senior Agricultural Economist
Poverty Reductions Division – 1
Country Operations Department – 1
Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

Teruhide FUJITA
Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific in Japan

(ii) Intergovernmental Organizations with no formal relations with FAO

Centre on Integrated Rural Development For Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)

Durga Prasad PAUDYAL
Director-General

OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (INGOs)

(i) INGO in Consultative Status with FAO

Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)

Chaiskran HIRANPRUK
ACWW Representative to UNESCAP

(ii) INGOS in Specialized Consultative Status with FAO

*International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE)***Chittinun TEJAGUPTA**

Associate Professor, School of Human Ecology
and Director of Thai Family Research and Development Center
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand

*World Conservation Union (IUCN)***Anshuman SAIKA**

Deputy Regional Programme Coordinator
IUCN Asia

John Grynderup Poulsen

Programme Coordinator
IUCN Indonesia

(iii) INGOs in Liaison Status with FAO*Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)***Estrella PENUNIA**

Secretary-General

Vicente FABE

AFA & National Council Member (Pakisama)
National Confederation of Peasant Movements in the Philippines

Raul BANZUELA

National Coordinator (Pakisama)
National Confederation of Peasant Movements in the Philippines

Sudaporn SITTISATHAPORNKUL

Chairperson
AFA Secretariat

*International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)***Vitoon Panyakul**

Green Net Group

*Pesticide Action Network Asia & the Pacific (PAN-AP)***Vijay Singh NEGI**

Coordinator
PAN-AP, Malaysia

Chun Hong TEH

Programme Officer
PAN-AP, Malaysia

Cynthia DEDURO

PAN-AP, Malaysia

Perumal Pitchai SIVAPRAGASAM

Human Development Organization (HDO)

PAN-AP, Sri Lanka

Rotary International

Som INDRA-PAYOONG
Rotary Representative

World Society for the Protection of Animal (WSPA)

Ian DACRE
Disaster Management Operations Director
World Society for the Protection of Animal in Asia

Saneekan ROSAMONTRI
Regional Programmes Manager
World Society for the Protection of Animal in Asia

(iv) **INGOS with no formal relations with FAO**

ACTION AID

Aftab Alam KHAN
International Coordinator
Stop Corporate Abuse & Trade Justice Campaigns, Pakistan

Francisco SARMENTO
Head of Food Security in Brazil

Sriyani PERERA
Asia Regional Women's Rights Coordinator
ActionAid Asia Regional Office in Sri Lanka

Dinah FUENTESFINA
International Campaigner
ActionAid Asia Regional Office in Thailand

Ramesh KHADKA
Asia Operations Manager
Action Aid Asia Regional Office in Thailand

Rashed Al Mahmud TITUMIR
Asia Regional Policy Coordinator
ActionAid Asia Regional Office in Thailand

Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (ASIADHRRRA)

Ma. Elena REBAGAY
Senior Program Office

Vitan SHALIMAR
East Asia Campaign Officer
OXFAM Great Britain

Hazel TANCHULING
Alternate Representative
East Asia Working Group (EARWG)

Aurora A. REGALADO

Managing Trustee
MODE/Philippine NGO Coalition for Food Sovereignty
and Fair Trade (PNLC Philippines)

Anni MITIN

Acting Secretary General,
Southeast Asian Council for Food Security and Fair Trade (SEACON)

Elpidio PERIA**Bunjong SIRI**

Translator

Association of Food and Agricultural Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific (AFMA)

Juejan TANGTERMTHONG

Executive Director

Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)

Pijush Kanti SAHA

Liaison Officer

Asia-Pacific Seed Association (APSA)

Zenaida N. GANGA

Technical Director

Beth ERLANO

Program & Publication Coordinator

South Asian Network for Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC)

Farhad MAZHAR

Managing Director, UBINIG
and Director of SANFEC in Bangladesh

Third World Network

Elenita C. DANO

Associate
Third Network in the Philippines

Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC)

Somboon SIRIRAKSOPHON

Policy and Program Coordinator

OBSERVERS FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS)

Hee Young PAIK

Professor
Department of Food and Nutrition, Seoul University
Republic of Korea

Korean FAO Association

Dong Ick NAM
Secretary-General
Korean FAO Association
Republic of Korea

Others

Sang Mu LEE
Chairman
Special Commission on Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Policies
Republic of Korea

Tae-Am LEE
Director-General
Department of Agricultural and Fisheries
Province of Gyeongsangbuk-Do
Republic of Korea

Jong Su KIM
Director
Division of Agriculture Development for FTA
Agriculture and Fisheries Bureau
Province of Gyeongsangbuk-Do

Ha Yoon LEE
Division of Agriculture Development for FTA
Agriculture and Fisheries Bureau
Province of Gyeongsangbuk-Do
Republic of Korea

Mekong River Commission

Katsuhiko YAMAUCHI
Technical Advisor, Irrigation Agriculture,
Irrigation and Forestry Programme

Allied Agro Industries

Murshed SALAM
Chairman
PVT Sector Agribusiness
Bangladesh

Tulaya PORNPIRIYAKULAMI
Director
PBT Sector Agribusiness
Thailand

CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

1. **D. KINLAY**
Conference Secretary
2. **H. KONUMA**
Conference Affairs Officer / FAO Thai Affairs Section
3. **A. QUERESHI**
Co-Conference Affairs Officer / Senior Administrative Officer
4. **Patrick DURST**
Reports Officer
5. **Diderik DE VLEESCHAUWER**
Information Officer
6. **Kevin MCKEEN**
Information Technology Officer
7. **Tarina AYAZI**
Meetings and Publications Officer
8. **Cristina SRIRATANA**
Registration Officer
9. **Maria Theresa RATTANA-AREEYAGON**
Documents Officer

FAO STAFF

1. **Jacques DIOUF**
Director-General
2. **He CHANGCHUI**
Assistant Director-General and
Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific
3. **Vili FUAVAO**
Sub-Regional Representative for the Pacific Islands & FAO Representative
4. **Michael RIGGS**
Information Management Specialist (RAPD)
5. **Thierry FACON**
Senior Water Management Officer (TDGL/RAPS)
6. **David HITCHCOCK**
Senior-Agribusiness and Infrastructure Officer (RAPG)
7. **Carolyn BENIGNO**
Animal Health Officer /Economics (RAPG)
8. **Simon FUNGE-SMITH**
Senior Fishery Officer (TDGL/RAPI)
9. **Jay CASTANO**
Senior Statistician (TDGL/RAPG)
10. **Rosa ROLLE**
Senior Agro-Industry and Post Harvest Officer (TDGL/RAPG)
11. **Purushottam MUDBHARY**
Chief. Policy Assistance Branch
12. **Francis MANGILA**
RAP Policy Officer (RAPP)
13. **Peter Sousa HOEJSKOV**
Food Quality and Safety Officer (RAPG)
14. **Ramesh SHARMA**
Senior Economist (EST)
15. **Thomas PRICE**
Senior Programme Officer, (ODGS)
16. **Donato ANTIPORTA**
Consultant
17. **Gustavo BEST**

Consultant

18. **Biplab NANDI**
Consultant

APPENDIX C**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

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APRC/08/4	Aid for trade initiative and the role of FAO
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APRC/08/6	Global and regional emergency issues: Transboundary animal diseases in the region and looking at the environmental factors affecting their occurrence
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APRC/08/OD/1	Order of the Day
APRC/08/OD/2	Order of the Day
APRC/08/OD/3	Order of the Day
APRC/08/OD/4	Order of the Day
APRC/08/OD/5	Order of the Day

APPENDIX D

INAUGURAL STATEMENT

H.E. MR. ABHISIT VEJJAJIVA
PRIME MINISTER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

AT THE OPENING SESSION OF
THE TWENTY-NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

BANGKOK, 30 MARCH 2009

*Ministers of the FAO Member Countries,
Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the FAO,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, I would like to extend to all of you a warm welcome to the Twenty-Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific now being held in Bangkok.

Hosting this important conference is not just a great honour for Thailand. It also provides us with an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the Organization's mission and efforts to defeat hunger and to pledge our full cooperation with the United Nations in ensuring that each individual has access to food at all time.

As all of you are fully aware, we are living in times of crises. Last year, we were seeking how to cope with food and fuel crises. This year, those two issues are being overtaken by the global financial crisis, which has an adverse impact on developed and developing countries alike.

Our effort to overcome hunger has also encountered much difficulty. Not many years back, when we believed that significant progress had been made in reducing hunger and poverty in Asia and the Pacific, we had to accept, at the same time, the hard fact that 60 per cent of the world's undernourished people were residing in our region. Indeed, if this rate continues, it will be more difficult for us to meet the targets set forth by the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals. More concerted actions on all fronts are, therefore, needed if we were to achieve such goals in time. In this regard, we can use this regional conference to identify priority needs of our region and to call for the FAO to accordingly adjust the focus of its interventions in order to help us overcome the challenges and get back on track to attaining our goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I notice that, besides the current state of food and agriculture in our region, the agenda of the Regional Conference at the Senior Officer Meeting (SOM) covered a wide range of other related subjects. These include, most notably, policies, strategies and options for coping with water scarcity and agribusiness in the context of globalization and free trade, as well as aid for trade initiatives. All these issues are relevant not only to Thailand but also to the entire region. It is also interesting to note, in this connection, that the Ministerial Meeting is going to discuss our common concerns on trans-boundary animal diseases, the immediate need for food security vis-à-vis energy security and, of course, the global financial crisis and its impact on food security.

In the Asia-Pacific, the agricultural sector remains the most important pillar of some countries and the sector plays a vital role in sustaining the livelihood of their peoples. With the region's ever

increasing population, the demand for food and agricultural products will inevitably rise, and could put constraints on their agricultural production potential.

But a more immediate concern is the current global financial crisis and its impact on food security. Let me just give an example of Thailand, which is a leading net exporter of agricultural products. The global economic downturn is affecting both its economic performance in general, and its ability to export agricultural products to its trading partners, in particular. Moreover, it demonstrates that the economic downturn hits the hardest on developing countries that do not have comprehensive social safety net or adequate welfare programmes. Hence, in taking all possible steps to ensure the growth of our national economy in 2009, the government has introduced the economic stimulus package to help reduce the impact on the export sector, including the small farm producers and those who were made unemployed as a consequence.

Another major constraint is that the Asia-Pacific region is prone to a wide range of natural disasters, such as droughts, floods, avian influenza, cyclones and earthquakes. Of course, the disasters we are likely to face are natural, human-induced, as well as economy-related in origins. However, in the years to come, it is the increased frequency and severity of climate-related disasters that should be our paramount concern.

In this regard, preparedness as well as mitigation and preventive measures are thus crucially important. The international community and governments must join their efforts, especially in putting in place early warning and surveillance systems with reinforced capacity, and in promoting the exchange of latest scientific information.

At the same time, we are mindful of other related challenges. One serious threat to food security is ecological degradation. The doubling of Asia-Pacific's energy demand every 12 years has serious consequences for air quality and worsens global warming. Moreover, we have also seen, across the region, the damaging consequences of unrestrained overuse of fertilizers, irrigation systems and pesticides.

Also another related issue is the linkage between energy security and food security. Thailand is not a major producer of energy crops; yet we believe that we have a potential for bio-energy production. Therefore, we have adopted a policy of agricultural zoning to promote the production of energy crops for this purpose without affecting the production of food crops.

As I have tried to point out, Thailand fully recognizes these and challenges. Unfortunately, like other developing countries, our drive towards food security is hampered by further constraints arising from existing protectionist trade policies, which limit our capacity to export our agricultural products.

In this regard, I highly commend the FAO for encouraging countries to actively participate in the current multilateral negotiations on the reform of agricultural trade rules. At the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, I already shared my perspective on food security, which, I emphasized, could be maintained through the reduction or elimination of market distortions. I thus look forward to the earliest conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. This will enable developing countries to benefit from trade in a way that will boost their food security-oriented development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than six decades now, the FAO has served as a reliable partner of the countries of our region in poverty alleviation and food security through increased agricultural productivity and rural development. Today, we still need the FAO as a partner in promoting further and more fruitful cooperation among nations. While pledging our support for cooperation in agricultural development on the bilateral, trilateral and multilateral levels, Thailand looks to the FAO in its efforts to meet its commitments to the World Food Summit Declaration and to the Millennium Development Goals.

We truly appreciate the continued support and technical assistance from the Organization. At the same time, FAO reform is an issue of great interest to all member countries. Thailand is following closely how the reform agenda will be translated into action. With regard to decentralization, it is essential that desire of member countries in each region be listened to and accommodated. Bearing in mind the critical mass of the Organization, its current financial status as well as the global financial crisis, I would like to reiterate that it is not advisable to establish any new sub-regional offices in the region. It is, rather, imperative to strengthen the capacity of the Regional Office in terms of its expertise, resources allocation and delegation of authority.

We also vigorously support FAO reform plans of action and continue to be engaged in its reform process. We do hope that this will result in the Organization becoming even more effective in helping us attain our Millennium Development Goals, especially in face of the challenges I have discussed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am certain that despite all these challenges and difficulties we will not lose any hope for the future. Not only did we survive tough times before, but also in Thailand, for example, we can look back, with much confidence, at our past achievements in combating hunger and poverty.

Therefore, I believe that by tackling the challenges and overcoming constraints that are facing us we will become stronger and more resilient. We will also be better equipped to tackle the problems, should they recur. But better still, we need to prevent the crisis from emerging and hindering our ability to meet our development goals. It is imperative that we use this FAO Regional Conference to discuss and formulate our response to current global crisis as well as preventive measures for the future.

On that note, I now have the pleasure to declare open this Ministerial Meeting of the Twenty-Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific officially. I wish you all every success in your deliberations.

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

*Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Ministers,
Mr Independent Chairman of the Council,
Honourable Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Twenty-ninth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in this beautiful city of Bangkok, capital of the historic Kingdom of Thailand.

I should like to express my gratitude to His Excellency, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, whose presence with us today reflects the high priority that the Royal Thai Government attaches to agricultural development and food security. I should like to thank him, as well as the Government and people of Thailand for having kindly agreed to host this Conference. On behalf of all delegations and staff of FAO, I should like to tell them how much we have been touched by their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

State of food insecurity in the world and in the Asia and the Pacific region

This Regional Conference takes place at a time when the world is facing a serious economic and financial crisis that is compounding the world food insecurity crisis. The precarious food situation has proven to us that reviving agricultural production in the developing world is the only viable solution to combat hunger.

The last three years have been marked by an escalation of food prices. The FAO food price index first rose by 7 percent between 2005 and 2006, then by 26 percent the following year, and finally by 40 percent during the first half of 2008. Since July 2008, good prospects for global production, but also the financial crisis and deteriorating economic conditions have led to a weakening of major cereal prices. In January 2009, the food price index was down 25 percent from January last year and 32 percent from its peak in June 2008. Yet, it was still 19 percent higher than the annual average for 2006 and 27 percent than 2005, when food prices were still stable. Between 2006 and 2008, fertilizer prices increased by 170 percent, seeds by 70 percent and animal feed by 72 percent, and became inaccessible to small farmers.

In 2007, mainly because of soaring food prices, the number of hungry people in the world rose by 75 million people, then has increased further by an estimated 40 million in 2008. In total, therefore, the world counts today 963 million undernourished people. In other words, almost one billion human beings or 15 percent of the planet's population are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

In the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, the number of undernourished people fell by 40 million between 1990-92 and 2003-05, a reduction of 7 percent. But in 2007, the food crisis led to a reverse of this progress and added 41 million to the number of people suffering from chronic hunger in those countries.

Changes in agricultural production

- **Cereals**

According to FAO's latest figures, Asia's cereal production in 2008/2009 is estimated at 959 million tonnes, that is an increase of 5 million tonnes over the previous year, against requirements estimated at 1 029 million tonnes. Asia's cereal imports are evaluated at 132 million tonnes in 2008-2009, up 11 percent from the previous year. By contrast, exports are estimated to decline by 13 percent to 40 million tonnes. This should lead to a trade deficit in cereals of 92 million tonnes this year, compared to a deficit of 73 million tonnes in 2007-2008.

- **Livestock**

Total meat production in Asia stood at 116 million tonnes in 2007, virtually unchanged from the previous year, while milk production increased by 5 percent from 2006 to reach 262 million tonnes in 2007. Although livestock products do not yet represent a significant share in the diet of the developing countries of the region, their consumption is growing strongly by more than 5 percent per year, one of the highest rates in the world.

- **Fisheries and aquaculture**

The region of Asia and the Pacific continues to be the world's largest producer of fish, with 92 million tonnes in 2007, or 66 percent of the global total. Aquaculture production rose by an annual rate of 6.3 percent between 1997 and 2007. It now represents 89 percent of world production. On the other hand, capture fisheries only increased by 0.9 percent per year during the same period. Fisheries and aquaculture continue to be an important source of food and protein, as well as of income because of trade and the development of value-added products. Demand for fishery products continues to grow, and hence the importance of effective management and sustainable use of this sector's resources in the region.

- **Forestry**

The forests of Asia and the Pacific are becoming increasingly important, particularly in the context of emerging global challenges that include mitigation of climate change, demand for bioenergy, water issues and frequency of natural disasters. The region's forest area increased by some 633 000 ha annually during the period 2000-2005, in contrast to the previous decade when there was a net loss of forest cover. It should be noted however that this increase is the result of activities realized in a small number of countries. In most countries of the region, deforestation continues at an alarming rate.

Global and regional issues and challenges

Soaring and volatile food prices and the uncertainties of agricultural markets have become major concerns as they threaten not only food security but also social and political stability. To address these issues, governments, donors, financial institutions and world and regional organizations must take urgent and bold measures to unlock agricultural potential and rapidly boost production in the most affected countries, in order to increase food supplies and facilitate the access of impoverished and vulnerable population groups to food.

As part of its "Initiative on Soaring Food Prices" FAO has mobilized 151 million US dollars from its own resources and its trust funds to provide small farmers with access to inputs. It has also provided technical expertise and support to 98 countries, including 11 in Asia and 7 in the South Pacific, that requested assistance in developing appropriate food security policies.

Under this initiative, FAO has taken part with the UN High-Level Task Force in assessment missions in 58 countries. And the European Commission also has approved a "Food Facility for Developing Countries", with a budget of 1 billion euros.

The financial crisis could have profound impacts on many developing countries. The tightening of credit could restrict access to the financing that these countries need, first to purchase on

the market the necessary quantities to cover their food needs, and second to invest in the means of production and in rural infrastructure.

In this time of crisis, it is important to address the complex and fundamental issues, particularly governance, the strengthening of national institutions, support to farmers, official development assistance, increasing the share of agriculture in national budgets, incentives for private investment, and partnerships at country level.

The lengthening of food supply chains that characterizes the development of agriculture in the region requires capacity building and the control of food quality and safety. This trend will only intensify in the future as consumers become wealthier and better educated. This will require increased investment in production and in the different stages of the supply chain.

The region will also have to overcome the challenge of climate change, notably higher temperatures, greater rainfall variability and more frequent extreme weather events, including floods and droughts. The reduction in water availability and increase in animal and plant diseases will primarily affect poor countries and the small island states that have reduced capacity of response to adapt and remedy against the negative impacts. Good agricultural practices such as conservation agriculture would contribute considerably to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Agenda of the Regional Conference

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In accordance with your recommendations, this Regional Conference will offer you an opportunity to participate in the debate on biofuels and their implications for food security, rural development and the environment. You will be informed about FAO's activities in the region and be able to examine the emergency issues that affect millions of people in the world and the region. The Conference will also discuss emerging issues and priorities relating to food security and agricultural development in the region.

We are honoured by the presence at this session of Dr. Noori-Naeini, Independent Chairman of the Council, who will give an overview on the progress of FAO reform and, more specifically, the Immediate Plan of Action that was approved by the Special Session of the FAO Conference last November.

Thirty-fifth (Special) Session of the Conference of FAO

At its Special Session, the Conference also entrusted the Director-General with the responsibility of establishing a High-Level Panel of Experts. To that end, I have written to all Member Nations to submit to them a preliminary document on the terms of reference for this Panel of Experts and asking them to begin to identify individuals who could be part of this network which will consist of several hundred members, including experts from the public sector, research centres and civil society.

The FAO Conference also requested that the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) – which is open to all Member States of FAO and the United Nations, and to representatives of other international institutions, NGOs, the private sector and civil society, and is mandated to monitor the world food security situation – be able to fully play its role in the new system of global governance. Work in this area is well underway in close collaboration with the Bureau of the CFS and in cooperation with the different concerned stakeholders.

I have also taken several measures and put in place mechanisms, including a reform support group, a panel on culture change and a team to oversee implementation of the Immediate Plan of

Action. I am pleased to inform you that, despite the funding constraints, we have made substantial progress on the reforms that fall within my administrative responsibility.

Conclusion

*Mr Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The development of agriculture is crucial if we are to address the major global and regional challenges that include food insecurity and extreme poverty.

The investment that must be engaged for irrigation and better water control, for building storage capacity and cold chain maintenance, for the construction of rural roads and for the production and multiplication of selected seeds; all these investments must be made for the benefit of the 600 million hungry people that live in the region by increasing agricultural production.

This Twenty-ninth Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific should address all these challenges and guide us in our future work. For its part, FAO will continue to support governments and regional partners in the development and implementation of effective programmes. We must together ensure sustainable agricultural and rural development, which is the very foundation of food security in the region. I will therefore await the results of your deliberations with great interest.

I wish you every success in your work and thank you for your kind attention.

APPENDIX F**NOTE ON THE ROUND TABLE ON THE BIOENERGY RUSH: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR FOOD SECURITY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. Issues related to the development and utilization of biomass resources, such as agricultural and agro-industry products and residues, energy crops, grasses, algae and others, as feedstock for the production of biofuels, have been high in the agenda of FAO's discussions and publications such as *The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA)* published in 2008 at both the global and regional levels.
2. This special attention by FAO is a reflection of the importance of bioenergy, in general, and of biofuels, in particular, in many FAO member countries. Because bioenergy development presents both opportunities and risks for food security, rural development (in terms of rural income and employment) and the environment, and cuts across various disciplines and sectors, FAO has a clear comparative advantage in dealing with its associated issues.
3. The Round Table discussion enriched the formal interventions made during the Regional Conference on various issues surrounding the development of bioenergy resources in the region, in general, and of biofuels, in particular. The exchange of information and perspectives revealed a wide range of bioenergy programmes in the region and confirmed that many countries in the region are already in various stages of developing and implementing bioenergy policies and strategies. The discussions underscored the need of country-specific policies on bioenergy in view of the different ecosystems, socioeconomic conditions, capacities, and levels of policy, legislation and technological development across the region.
4. It was evident that interest in bioenergy in the Asia-Pacific region extends beyond the transport sector to its potential use and application in industry, households, and for export. The advantages of using bioenergy to meet local and national energy demands rather than export were stressed, since local use helps capture a key potential of bioenergy related to supplying reliable and affordable energy to rural areas. It was generally recognized that policies and measures should be put in place to safeguard and monitor the balanced use of land for the production of food crops and bioenergy feedstocks.
5. The Round Table discussed various approaches for developing biofuels without imperilling food security. These included agricultural zoning, definition and identification of marginal and degraded lands and clear policies and legislation favouring the use of non-food feedstocks. In this regard, participants noted the advantages of energy crops such as jatropha, the use of surplus molasses and oil-producing algae. Agricultural residues for energy use and agro-industry wastes for producing biogas were identified as alternatives to the use of food crops as feedstock for bioenergy production.
6. The Round Table stressed the need for sustainability criteria to assess the economic benefits, environmental impacts and social equity of biofuels production, conversion and use options. Reference was made to the ongoing international efforts in this area being made by FAO, the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), and the Sustainable Biofuels Round Table. Participants emphasized that certification schemes for biofuels were required, but that they should not become artificial barriers to the trade of biofuels.
7. The Round Table discussed the need to accelerate the development and maturing of so-called "second generation" bioenergy technologies, which by utilizing lignocellulosic materials, non-food energy crops and agricultural and forestry by-products, would allow for a de-coupling of bioenergy production from direct competition with food production.
8. The Round Table strongly encouraged regional cooperation in the bioenergy field in the form of information and experience sharing, knowledge development and technology transfer. This was

particularly important regarding the support to countries with few available biomass resources and when small-scale and decentralized bioenergy systems appeared to offer potential solutions to rural development and energy needs.

9. The Round Table recognized FAO's role in the bioenergy arena. It stressed the need for FAO to assist in bioenergy policy formulation and capacity building, and to continue its technical work in partnership with other regional and global organizations.

10. The Round Table noted that important work is progressing in the Asia-Pacific region on various complex aspects of bioenergy development and that continued efforts should be made to advance knowledge and experience, especially to ensure benefits for the rural poor. Community-level participation in developing and implementing bioenergy programmes was seen as crucial to ensure that benefits of bioenergy development were realized by those most in need.

11. The Round Table acknowledged the special constraints of small island developing states and countries with limited available land, and stressed the need to provide assistance to these members in addressing both energy security and food security in a balanced manner.
