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Food
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Продовольственная и
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организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

TWENTY-SIXTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Luanda, Angola, 3 - 7 May 2010

STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairperson,

Mr Chairperson of the Council,

Distinguished Ministers,

Honourable Delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure to be here with you today in this beautiful city of Luanda for the Twenty-sixth FAO Regional Conference for Africa.

On behalf of the Organization and all of you, I should like to express our gratitude to the President of the Republic of Angola, His Excellency José Eduardo Dos Santos, to his Government and to the people of Angola for hosting this Conference and for their generous hospitality.

State of food insecurity in the world and in the region

The work of this Regional Conference takes place while the serious financial and economic crisis is not yet over. It has led to economic recession in many countries, affecting the poorer countries and populations in particular. The world population is expected to reach 9.1 billion in 2050. Food production will have to increase by 70% worldwide and to double in the developing countries if we are to meet food requirements. But we now have more than 1 billion people in the world who are suffering from hunger, which is 105 million more than in 2008. As a result, one-sixth of humanity is hungry and malnourished.

In sub-Saharan Africa, since 2009, over 269 million people are malnourished and 30 percent of the population suffers from hunger. This situation clearly demands our urgent undivided attention.

The World Summit on Food Security organized by FAO in Rome in November 2009 pledged to eradicate hunger in the world.

The developing countries are more integrated into the world's financial and commercial activities because of economic globalization. This has raised their exposure to shocks in international markets, resulting in widespread reductions in their financial and trade flows and in funds available for development programmes.

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The crisis has however placed agriculture and food security at the heart of national and regional development policies and programmes, which allows us to look to the next decade with greater optimism. This new order of priorities should be an opportunity to support small producers and strengthen family farming.

Agricultural development in the region in 2008-2009

Africa is rich in arable land, water and labour. With appropriate policies, it could increase its agricultural production, its income and its food security. Africa accounts for 2 to 3% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP); its agricultural GDP accounts for just over 5% of the world total; its trade in agricultural commodities is less than 2% and declining. Agriculture is not always a regional priority, even though it employs 57% of the region's workforce and accounts for 20% of its GDP and 11% of its exports.

Agriculture remains the key to future industrialization and poverty reduction. It also has a strong multiplier effect on economies of between 1.5 and 2.7%. Agricultural production in the region has increased mainly on account of more cropland, which has expanded at 7 to 20% per year during the past 20 years.

Since the 1970s, agricultural imports have continued to outpace exports. Africa is becoming a larger net importer of food commodities. Each year it spends 33 billion US dollars on agricultural imports, mostly foodstuffs, while its exports have stood still at 14 to 15 billion US dollars.

Crops

In 2008, Africa produced 152.3 million tonnes of cereals, up 12% from the previous year. Forecasts for 2009 are that Africa's cereal production could reach 160 million tonnes.

Livestock

Livestock represents 35% of the region's GDP, or 4.4% of the global value of livestock products. Annual growth in meat, milk and egg production remains between 2 and 3%, while the corresponding developing country average is over 4%.

Although Africa is the continent with the most forage resources, its livestock development has lagged behind the other continents. Its growth has not matched population growth, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Fisheries and aquaculture

African fisheries production has levelled off at some 8 million tonnes per year, with 90% of this coming from small producers. Fish is the main source of protein for the bulk of the African population but *per capita* fish consumption is only 7.6 kg per year, which is half the world average. Africa is also the only region in the world in which fish consumption is decreasing.

Historically, aquaculture has only contributed modestly to food security and economic development in the region. However, the sharper investment focus on African aquaculture has produced a much greater availability of farmed fish on local markets.

Forestry

Africa has about 674 million hectares of forest, or 17% of global forest cover. However, the region also suffers extensive losses. In the ten years between 2000 and 2010 the region's forest cover diminished by 3.4 million hectares each year (or 0.49%).

There is therefore an urgent need for appropriate strategies and new mechanisms to combat forest degradation and deforestation in the region.

Mr Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Main challenges for the region

The causes of food insecurity in Africa remain the same as those I mentioned at the last Regional Conference in 2008 in Nairobi. Water control is the determining factor for securing production and rapidly raising agricultural productivity in Africa, where less than 4% of renewable water resources are used, compared to 20% in Asia. Ninety-three percent of Africa's arable land is dependent on unpredictable rainfall, with a greater risk of drought because of climate change.

The use of modern inputs is very inadequate. Africa applies only 16 kilos of fertilizer per hectare, compared to 152 kilos in South America and 162 kilos in Asia. The level is even lower in sub-Saharan Africa which only applies 9 kilos per hectare. The improved seeds that fuelled the Green Revolution in Asia and Latin America are rarely used in Africa, where only one-third of seeds are systematically controlled and certified. Transport infrastructure and storage and packaging facilities are lacking. Rural roads are comparable to those of India in the early 1970s. Harvest losses can amount to 40%, even 60% for certain products. And transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases pose a serious threat to Africa's food security.

Underinvestment in agriculture is the core reason for underdevelopment of the sector and hunger in Africa. The share of worldwide Official Development Assistance (ODA) devoted to agriculture, forests and fisheries has fallen from 19% in 1980 to 5% today. In response to the Maputo Declaration in 2003, only nine countries currently allocate at least 10% of their national budgets to agriculture and rural development. It is however encouraging to note the policy change at the G8 meeting in L'Aquila in July 2009 which advocated greater production from small farmers in the food-deficit developing countries, a change that was echoed at the FAO World Summit on Food Security last November. The Heads of State and Government pledged to boost the share of ODA allocated to agriculture and food security, on the basis of requests from individual countries.

Mr Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

I am pleased to note that the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of NEPAD, the CAADP, for which we have all worked so tirelessly, is being adopted by a growing number of countries. In this context, FAO helps update national strategies for the development of agriculture and food security. Implementation of the CAADP requires an annual investment of some 25 billion US dollars. CAADP round tables have so far led to the signature of Compacts for 18 African countries. FAO helped prepare those Compacts. FAO is also providing assistance to several countries in the drafting of corresponding investment plans. It will reply favourably to requests from other countries seeking FAO assistance in their post-Compact process.

Global and regional challenges

Food security faces many new challenges: climate change, increased demand in terms of quantity and quality, competition from biofuels whose production tripled between 2000 and 2008. There is also rapid population growth, urbanization and migration, animal and plant disease and volatility of agricultural prices.

(Climate change and bioenergy)

Mitigating the impacts of climate change will largely depend on progress in producing plant varieties and animal breeds that are better adapted to changing ecosystems and on greater investment in irrigation, rural and communication infrastructure and sustainable resource management. FAO is promoting the use of conservation farming techniques which enrich soil with organic matter, raise soil humidity and increase carbon sequestration.

The production of bioenergy under appropriate conditions could help raise rural income, provided prudent policies and regulations are adopted that can balance food security and large-scale biofuel production.

At the Copenhagen Summit on climate change in December 2009, the developed countries pledged an additional 30 billion US dollars in the period 2010-2012 for developing countries, small island states and Africa, divided equally for adaptation and mitigation. The agreement calls for the establishment of a "Copenhagen Green Climate Fund" as the operating arm of the Accord's financial mechanism. The fund will support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing countries related to mitigation, adaptation, capacity building, development and transfer of technology.

(Soaring food prices)

The spectacular rise in food prices in 2007-2008 and the global recession have exacerbated poverty and food insecurity in many African countries, where more than 50% of household income is spent on food. The latest assessment of countries facing food emergencies identifies 33 such countries, with 22 in Africa.

In the framework of FAO's Initiative on Soaring Food Prices launched in December 2007, 35 African countries have received technical and financial assistance from the Organization's own resources, for a total of 15.7 million US dollars. The European Union's Food Facility has contributed 317.5 million US dollars to improve small farmer access to inputs and quality services. A number of African countries should be beneficiaries of this initiative.

Mr Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agenda of the Conference

This Twenty-sixth Regional Conference will be informed of FAO activities and will be examining issues that impact on millions of people in the region. The Conference will also discuss priority themes, including:

- FAO support for accelerated implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme;
- implications of climate change for food security and natural resource management in Africa;
- implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal in relation to the issue of FAO's decentralized offices network;
- reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

A Forum on Investment in African Agriculture has been organized as a side event of the Conference. You will also be briefed on the results of regional processes including the work of the commissions on agricultural statistics, fisheries and forestry.

FAO reform

FAO is currently undergoing the most profound process of reform to take place within the United Nations system. It is renewing all its work arrangements and the way it performs its mandate and delivers its services to member countries.

Implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action has been the primary objective of both the Member Nations and the Secretariat since it was adopted at the Special Session of the FAO Conference in November 2008. The main elements of the Immediate Plan of Action are:

- adoption of a planning framework and a new results-based culture;
- decentralization and greater delegation of authority;
- organizational streamlining;
- improved management of human resources;
- more effective governance.

Since January, the regional offices have been responsible for overseeing the budget and programme for technical officers in the region. They will gradually assume leadership of the substantive work of country offices. In addition, the staff of regional offices have been trained to take responsibility for the Technical Cooperation Programme.

To facilitate the alignment of our administrative structure with a results-based framework, a comprehensive restructuring of FAO Headquarters was initiated in 2009 and is due for completion in 2012. A key element of this exercise has been the elimination of 40 Director-level positions to produce a flatter Organizational structure and hierarchy.

The Independent Chairperson of the Council will explain these activities in more detail, especially at the level of Representatives of the Member Nations.

Reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Last November, the 36th session of the FAO Conference approved another significant reform, that of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The purpose of CFS reform is to improve governance of world food security, using existing structures and programmes and creating effective partnerships.

The renewed CFS has the following important characteristics:

- it is a global forum for discussion to foster a convergence of views on the causes and consequences of food insecurity and on the modalities of necessary action;
- it is a mechanism for the global coordination of efforts to eliminate hunger and ensure their long-term coherence and effectiveness;
- it operates on a solid scientific basis and includes a High-Level Panel of Experts that will help it make the right decisions by providing objective and impartial research and analysis;
- it is open to all stakeholders and includes representatives of governments, regional and global institutions, economic and financial partners, farmer organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, foundations and civil society.

But if the CFS is to serve as a platform for high-level intergovernmental decision-making and thus to acquire political credibility, governments must be represented at ministerial level at its meetings. Equally important, in addition to the line ministries and their technical departments, ministers of cooperation and development must also participate in discussions on key economic and financial issues.

At the national level, it is essential to establish partnerships involving Food Security Thematic Groups and National Alliances Against Hunger, which will need to be

strengthened. These two mechanisms should support the national authorities in ensuring a rational allocation and utilization of budgetary resources, Official Development Assistance, domestic private investment and foreign direct investment.

Thus the new Committee on World Food Security, its High-Level Panel of Experts and the national mechanisms will provide the cornerstone of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Conclusion

Mr Chairperson,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Only five years separate us from 2015, the date by which the 192 member governments of the Organization pledged, in 1996, to halve the number of people suffering from hunger.

I remain convinced that with the political will and good governance, Africa will be able to develop its agriculture in order to adequately feed its population. This political will was expressed in the Maputo Declaration of 2003, reiterated in the Abuja Declaration on Food Security of 2006 and subsequently reaffirmed in different plans for implementation of the CAADP. It must now translate into coherent, realistic programmes that can be rapidly implemented to achieve the objectives that have been set.

The problem of food insecurity is a political issue. It is the decisions of governments that determine the allocation of resources between sectors. I welcome the vision of the serving Chairman of the Assembly of the African Union, His Excellency Mr Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, as expressed in his investiture speech. He challenged his peers to step from words to deeds by focusing on agriculture and food security so that, five years from now, no African child will be dying of hunger and malnutrition.

With your support and true to its mission, FAO will continue to provide technical assistance to its member countries in formulating and implementing policies, strategies and programmes aimed at overcoming the challenge of food insecurity in Africa and elsewhere.

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