



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Thirty-ninth Session

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)

Excellencies,
Honourable Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, 870 million people are not getting enough food to meet their most basic dietary needs. Eight hundred and seventy million people are getting far too little food for the life of heavy toil which is the lot of most poor, food insecure people.

At the same time, erratic food prices are making life more difficult for those poor rural people who are net buyers of food.

For many years, food prices were artificially low. Today, the upward trend in food prices reflects the reality that demand for food is growing. Poor smallholders need the tools to increase their supply, and to do so sustainably, to grow their businesses and meet this demand.

But investing is a risky business for poor farmers. They need clear and reliable signals that higher prices are here to stay. And they need the tools to respond.

Yet, this is not what we are seeing. The volatility in today's markets creates risks and uncertainty for poor smallholders, making it difficult for them to adapt and discouraging them from investing in their farms.

Clearly, we have our work cut out for us. There is a vast agenda in front of us, and here, the Committee on World Food Security has an important role to play.

The CFS has already made a significant contribution this year by bringing all the pieces of this agenda together in The Global Strategic Framework, which you will discuss this week. It promises to be a

valuable tool to guide coordinated action as we work to build the resilience of poor rural people during periods of crisis, be it temporary or protracted.

The CFS is the only global forum that brings together the full range of stakeholders in food security -- from national governments to farmers' organisations, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions, technical agencies and – of course – the Rome-based United Nations agencies.

The need for a forum for policy coordination has never been clearer. I am confident that the CFS will step up to this challenge. We are working in concert as never before, supported by a world class panel of experts under the leadership of Dr Swaminathan.

One tangible sign of the CFS' ability to unite stakeholders is the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources, which were approved earlier this year.

It wasn't an easy process. The negotiations were tough. But every important player had a voice, and in the end consensus was reached. IFAD supported the development of these guidelines and looks forward to supporting governments in their implementation.

With the negotiations for the new land tenure guidelines behind us, it is now time to turn our efforts towards guidelines for responsible agriculture investment. At a time when investment in the rural areas of developing countries is rapidly picking up pace, these guidelines are essential to support the capacity of the biggest on-farm investors in agriculture in the developing world.

These investors are smallholder farmers themselves. I hope that, having learned from our past experience, these new guidelines will be developed in a timely and less costly fashion. IFAD is ready to support the CFS discussions on this.

We know the strength and transformative power of smallholder-inclusive investment in agriculture. This was underscored just last week by the findings of FAO's SOFI report which noted that GDP growth generated by agriculture was five times more effective in reducing poverty in low income countries than GDP growth in other sectors. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is eleven times more effective.

As the international community works towards creating tools and guidelines for a sustainable development agenda this year, the CFS also has an important role to play.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I wish you a productive and interesting week and look forward to a successful outcome of this 39th session of the CFS.

Thank you.