

NOTES

Food for the cities multi-disciplinary group briefing on World Urban Forum V to FAO Permanent Representatives

Rome, 17 March 2010

Before the World Urban Forum 5th Session, FAO – Food for the cities (FAO-FCIT) has been requested by Argentina on behalf of the “Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries” to provide with a briefing in order to have further information on FAO's activities related to urban areas.

FAO Permanent Representatives have been briefed about the World Urban Forum V (WUF V) on 17 March 2010 in Rome, FAO headquarters, by the Food for the cities multi-disciplinary group. Alexander Müller, FAO Assistant Director-General of the Natural Resources department (ADG-NR), chaired the meeting. He has presented the WUF V, organized by UN-Habitat, the commitment of FAO for this major international event, and a brief context about urbanization and key issues for FAO in cities. His presentation has been followed by Paul Munro-Faure's presentation of the “Food for the cities” multi-disciplinary group he chairs and the cross-cutting issues it deals with. He also presented FAO messages to be brought to the WUF V¹. During the meeting, there have also been interventions of Florence Egal, secretary of FAO-FCIT, Paola Castelgrande (Decentralized Cooperation Programme) and Michelle Gauthier (Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry).

Alexander Müller insisted on the importance of this very important event hosted by Brazil, a country which has implemented very innovative policies regarding food issue.

The key messages of FAO that have been highlighted by Paul Munro-Faure are:

- ❖ Mayors and urban planners must incorporate food security and nutrition in urban policies and planning.
- ❖ Natural resources management in urban & peri-urban areas is a key element of natural resource management national planning.
- ❖ Urban-rural linkages are key-dimensions of livelihoods and territorial planning, cities are key drivers and support rural development.
- ❖ Food security is a critical issue for cities in the context of crisis and disaster risk management.

Many countries were represented. They have expressed a strong support for FAO's commitment on the food, agriculture and cities issues in a context of growing cities. It started on the floor by Argentina, president of GRULAC (Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries) and Brazil. Brazil insisted on the fact that the event is very timely

¹ You may find the complete presentation on FAO-FCIT Website at the following URL:
www.fao.org/fcit/workingdocs/wuf5-bridging-the-urban-divide/en/

because of Brazil ongoing efforts: in this context, FAO can help to link and add value on urban and rural policies.

Some key questions, comments and propositions from different country representatives who attended the meeting are listed below:

- Brazil, Armenia and Italy asked for more research, quantitative and qualitative data and better definitions to improve understanding of food, agriculture and cities (ex.: rural-urban linkages in terms of migration; food supply chain, particularly for the reduction of the loss of food). Argentina and Egypt want to be informed about the future work of FAO once WUF V will be finished.

- The importance of urban-rural linkages has been raised with complementary aspects: 1) for farmers, it gives access to the market and it enables rural development and 2) for urban people, it gives better access to fresh and healthy food, for better nutrition. Infrastructures improvement, electricity (biogas) and water supply are issues to improve these linkages (e.g. Ghana, Belgium, Afghanistan). It should create jobs all along the chain.

- Necessity of continuing efforts for Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture (UPA) (Argentina, among others), even if some country consider that UPA has only a very marginalize role to feed the cities. UPA, often only an informal sector, has a role to contribute to providing fresh and nutritious food for urban poor and it is needed to work on safety issues, mainly related to waste water use, etc; and also land tenure issues.

- Different specific themes have been also highlighted and presented during the briefing, mainly: i) decentralized cooperation; ii) urban and peri-urban forestry; iii) land management (effects of growing cities and issues of expropriation and compensation) and iv) nutrition in cities: how to reach a sustainable and healthy diet (double burden of bad nutrition that particularly hit cities of South America: obesity and deficiency in micro-nutrients).

- The case of Haiti has often been mentioned as a very particular situation that needs, besides help and intervention, a better understanding of what is happening in the context of urban-rural linkages.

- Egypt, Belgium, Cape Verde asked for more collaboration between the Rome-based agencies: World Food Programme (WFP) and International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). It has also been said that the collaboration already exists, for example with the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition.

A post WUF V meeting for the permanent representatives will be organized.

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