

Time to Act Together: Coordinating Policy Responses to the Global Food Crisis

The President of the General Assembly and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) are co-convening a High-Level Special Event to foster coordinated global policy responses to the current global food crisis supported by – and in support of – the UN Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy, and Finance.

DATE: 18 July 2022

TIME: 15:00 – 18:00 EDT (New York) / 21:00 – 24:00 CEST (Rome)

LOCATION: Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Statement by Cindy Brown on behalf of the CFS Private Sector Mechanism

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, and esteemed colleagues,

In 2007/2008 we saw concern about the rising cost of food. At that moment, international audiences began to pay attention to agriculture and food. We saw new programs, direct funding to support farmers and rural infrastructure. However, that was a brief lived moment of attention. Here we are today facing a crisis several-fold more significant and with long term ramifications.

Once again, the clarion call is to invest directly into agriculture and food chains. Overseas development assistance for agriculture is only 4 to 5% of total investment. This number is too low when you consider **that 80% of the world's people living in multidimensional poverty live in rural areas.**

The fact is, the food production system has been working very hard to deliver the food we need through multiple years of challenge. If we were to look at my own case, as a member of a farm family, a number of years ago we started planting dark red kidney beans along with other crops on our farm. We found markets for our kidney beans and bought kidney beans from other farmers, thus creating a family business that focuses on a high-quality, nutritious, and sustainable crop. However, this year we find a tremendous challenge in contracting those beans and delivering a diverse diet due to price competition with corn and wheat. As those crops have risen in value, it has been hard to plant diverse crops.

If you then consider that for the past two years, we've been short staffed due to covid which necessitated overtime to keep production running, we experienced longer down times due to the unavailability of repair parts and faced major challenges in finding additional labour, so there can be little wonder why the price of food has increased.

Layer on that the logistical challenges that we find to ship our beans around the world, and it's painfully obvious that markets need a competitive shipping sector and that movement of food becomes a global priority.

The reality is that food production is a challenging job.

We hear increasingly the UN talking about the importance of working with the Private Sector and we appreciate that the UN Committee on Food Security provides space for both Civil Society and Private Sector.

We can tell you on a day-to-day basis, that in addition to the policy discussions, we need working systems that create ongoing conversations for the private sector to interact with decision makers and to discuss the pressure points that are inhibiting our ability to deliver food efficiently. These are challenging times and unless we take them seriously with new modes of communication, with new commitments to equity - like the voluntary guidelines on gender empowerment that are currently being negotiated at the CFS - without putting focus on the rural dimension of challenges we see in the food system, we will not succeed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

More than that, we will see profound impacts in how people respond to their governance structures and to the humanitarian crises that will continue to escalate unless we make these investments right at the start of the food system. We count on the UN, particularly the FAO, WFP and IFAD, for leadership to address these challenges and stem the escalation of the food crisis.