

**ISI Satellite Meeting
in Maputo on 13-14 August 2009
STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL
AND RURAL STATISTICS**

OPENING CEREMONY

SPEECH OF

THE PRIME MINISTER OF MOZAMBIQUE

(EN)

Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Excellency

Mr. President of the National Institute of Statistics, Excellency

FAO Representative in Mozambique and in the Kingdom of Swaziland, Excellency

Director of Statistics Division of FAO - ROME

Members of the Diplomatic Body in Mozambique,

Dear Delegates and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with a great pleasure that I, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique and in my own name, address you with greeting to all delegates and guests of the International Satellite Conference on Agricultural Statistics which takes place in Maputo, capital of the Republic of Mozambique, as integral part of the International Conference of Statistics, which for the first time takes place in the African continent, in Durban, Republic of South Africa.

We address special greetings to all foreign delegations and guests and in particular those delegates and guests who for the first time arrive in Mozambique, this pearl of the Indian Ocean, which is always ready to receive visitors.

For us, Mozambicans, it's a great honour to host this Conference on agricultural statistics since it may contribute to increase the visibility of our Country within the technical-scientific community in the area of statistics in general and of agricultural statistics in particular. We think that the choice of Mozambique to hold this Conference was wise and in good time not only because this Country gives a big importance to agriculture, which represents about 22% of its GDP and which has a role and an enormous contribution in the food security of its populations, but also because, with the advent of the peace, the Country is undergoing positive transformations and considerable progresses in actions for fighting poverty, food insecurity and for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Country is in the path of development and strengthening of democracy and the participation of all citizens, either individually, or through several representative groups and organisations from the civil society have been systematically stimulated by our Government.

In Mozambique we are aware of the world food crisis situation which from some years ago until nowadays affected our planet and we believe in the role that agriculture has playing and may play not only to mitigate the present crisis but also to improve continually the food security situation and reduce the absolute poverty levels of the world population.

Of course it is a challenge for the most of our countries to make agriculture, responsible for the production of crops livestock production ,for the production of textiles for clothing, bio-fuels, raw material so that agro-industry may satisfy the necessities of a world population in constant growth, making that hundreds of millions of people get out of the under nutrition and food insecurity, chronic hunger and absolute poverty to acceptable standards of living.

According to FAO estimates in 2007 more than 920 million people in the world were undernourished and by 2010 it is projected that the number of undernourished exceeds 960 million, which contradicts the expectations of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). About 65% of undernourished people in the World live in seven countries of Asia and Africa.

According to the World Development Report (WDR) 3/4 of the poor in the developing Countries live in rural areas and the most of them rely on agriculture for their livelihood.

According to our statistics, Mozambique in 2008 counted about 31% out of 3.7 million of rural and peri-urban households experiencing to live hunger periods along the year. In 2005 the proportion of households that experienced hunger period was of 38%. Nowadays the chronic food insecurity reaches about 35% of people in the Country.

This is the reason why the Government of Mozambique gives a big role to agriculture which is consecrated in our constitution as a base for economic Development of the Country, recognising that this sector has a great contribution to give in actions for fighting hunger and food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.

This importance is demonstrable in actions and interventions of the Government of Mozambique aiming at stimulating the development of agriculture, of which the ongoing Green Revolution Strategy and Action Plan for food Production are pointed out, being both of them the instruments guided to revert the food and nutritional insecurity situation lived in the Country through an increase of the agricultural production. Significant additional financial, material and human resources have been allocated in the last 2 years in order to increase the production of food.

Either in Mozambique, or in other developing countries, where the agriculture plays an important role in food security or in national economics, the agricultural productivity and the level of rationality, sustainability and efficiency in the use of natural resources in agriculture are far to be satisfactory.

In order to revert the prevailing situation of existence of high levels of population living with insufficiency of food and food insecurity, appropriate policies and innovative interventions should be designed and implemented at level of our countries in order to make a radical transformation in agricultural production, raising more and more the agricultural productivity,

the supply and distribution of food, improving its access and use by the populations. In this manner we can say that we are contributing for the construction of a better world, a world of grater equity and social justice.

We are convinced that for these policies and intervention strategies to be realistic and appropriate for developing agriculture and improve the food security they should have as unavoidable pillar a quality statistical information, updated, which serves as indispensable support for taking informed decision as well as sustain the agricultural research.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We want to assure you that the Government of Mozambique supports fully the initiative and actions of agricultural statistics' scientists and professionals in search of technical and methodological solutions which enable the production, in a sustainable manner, of quality statistical data and information and available in due time, accessible to the different type of users, in particular to public planners and decision makers.

We are fully identified with the objective of this Conference which is to make a global strategy for improving agricultural and rural strategies searching synergies and subsidies from international organizations and national agencies involved in the production and use of these statistics. The Government of Mozambique supports actions leading to the integration of the statistical system, which enable the production of data which are used timely in monitoring the implementation of programmes and plans for developing Agriculture and rural economics as well as in monitoring the food security and interventions for fighting poverty. We also think that the requirements in quality statistical data and information in the area of agriculture, food security, natural resources management, pisciculture and aquaculture which take into account gender and environmental considerations, including climatic changes and other transversal aspects should be reviewed so that they are adjusted and the methodologies are updated in order to meet the demand more and more sophisticated and demanding in quality information for the challenges of XXI Century. We think that this is a big challenge.

We also think that the following are challenges for the agricultural statistics experts, cooperation partners and governments, among others:

1. Production of reliable, non-conflicting, comparable statistics, available in due time, which also meet the needs of users at lower levels, for example at District level, where the policies and

strategies are implemented, enabling the interventions for fighting food insecurity and poverty to become more concrete;

2. Elaboration and implementation of statistical development strategic plans with an integrated perspective improving the statistical coordination;

3. Availability of financial, material and human resources adequate for the strengthening of statistical systems.

At last we want to express our thanks to all organizers of this Conference, either international or national. We also address our gratitude to the cooperation partners represented herein and others as well as to international consultants and researchers who have given systematically their support to actions for the fortification of the statistics in general and the agricultural statistics in particular. We express our special gratitude to FAO which, untiringly and with recognized professionalism, has been providing its technical and methodological support to all Countries and particularly to the developing countries which are the most needy in the fortification of their statistical systems.

Allow me, finally, to wish that the Conference works are carried out with success and their objectives be reached.

I hereby declare the International Satellite Conference works session on Agricultural Statistics opened.

Maputo, 13 August 2009