

International Agriculture Ministers' Panel Discussion

Berlin, Germany, 21 January 2012

Keynote Address by José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Madam / Chairperson, Federal Minister of Agriculture Miss Aigner

Honourable Ministers and Ambassadors,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour for me to be with you today. This is my first official visit since I took office as Director-General of FAO 20 days ago. I am pleased to have the opportunity to see many familiar faces again and to be in Germany, a country with a firm commitment to a stronger and more effective FAO and to promoting sustainable development, a shared objective among those in this room. So, thank you Miss Aigner for the invitation.

2. During my mandate, I will focus FAO's work on three priorities.

3. Firstly, FAO will step up its effort to end hunger. I am convinced that we can achieve this goal if we work together, with true political commitment, and transform our will into concrete action. This is an effort that must involve all actors at all levels. Neither FAO nor any other agency or government alone can eradicate hunger. FAO is ready to increase its support to low-income, food deficit countries, especially those facing prolonged crises, countries that place food security at the top of their national agendas. FAO can immediately assist them to prepare strategies and mobilize resources to implement them. This needs to be a bottom up approach, using the knowledge and experience available at the local level and building up from there. Africa is FAO's priority. Later this month, I will attend the African Union Summit and also visit Kenya and Somalia.

4. Secondly, FAO will also support the shift to sustainable patterns of production and consumption. This is a central point in the conversations we will have today, so I will come back to it later.

5. Thirdly, the Organization will be working for greater fairness in food management. The international community needs to put in place an effective global governance system for food security and agree upon rules on how we want to manage our shared resources – land, water, genetic resources, etc. This is a necessary complement to the efforts we need to make at regional, national and local levels.

6. To be able to deliver on all this, FAO must do two things: accelerate the reform process that has been agreed upon by its Member States to a satisfactory conclusion; and engage in new partnerships and forms of cooperation.

7. Until my mandate ends in June 2015, these will be the priorities that you will see FAO focusing its work on. Three and a half years is a short period, so we have no time to lose. In three and a half years, I want us to see an Organization that has been able to improve its delivery, reinvent itself where necessary and give an increasingly significant contribution to achieving food security and promoting sustainability.

8. This is a challenging time that we must confront together. I trust our capacity to do so, to make the best of the opportunities that any crisis brings. For instance, the upcoming Rio+20 Conference provides us with a unique opportunity to advance the agendas of food security and sustainability together, especially with the added urgency of the impact of climate change.

9. I believe that the goal of ending hunger is not incompatible with promoting sustainable agriculture. On the contrary, we need to advance together in these areas if we are to succeed in any one of them. No development will be sustainable if we leave hungry people behind.

10. Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to address four specific points.

11. First, I would like to begin by discussing the role of women. Women are key in many aspects of food security. In most cases, they are responsible for assuring that all family members have a healthy diet. This is no small task, especially when food prices rise. In this case, protein rich products, fresh fruits

and vegetables are usually the first to go, and are replaced by cheaper but less nourishing products. It is not a contradiction that overweight and obesity tend to increase in times of crisis.

12. Additionally, over the years, we have lost our grandmothers' expertise on how to prepare the food we eat. We have become used to buying processed food instead of producing it ourselves. We need to urgently put in place food and nutrition education programmes to help families eat better.

13. Women can also play an important role in increasing food production, as shown in the last edition of FAO's State of Food and Agriculture 2010.

14. Second point: I want to discuss how we can use and conserve our natural resources better. FAO and the Committee on World Food Security – CFS, are leading an important consultation to finalize the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests next March.

15. This is a participatory effort in which governments, civil society organizations and the private sector discuss the principles that we want to put in place to guarantee that our natural resources promote food security and are used in a responsible way. These guidelines provide a framework that States can use when developing their own strategies, policies, legislation and programmes on the governance of natural resources.

16. Let me point out also that access to water will become increasingly important, and it is also an issue that needs to be looked at carefully and at the international level. Throughout the world, lakes and rivers either set limits between countries, or flow from one to another. The management of transboundary waters has become more and more conflictive in recent years. FAO has the necessary expertise to assist countries in better management of water resources and improving efficiency in agricultural water uses.

17. Third, I would like to discuss in greater detail sustainable food production and consumption.

18. We can feed the seven billion people living on our planet today and the 9 billion people who will live on it in 2050. The question is: *how* do we want to do

this? I think there is only one answer. We need to shift from our current agricultural paradigm, which is based on the intensive use of natural resources and inputs, to one that allows us to increase yields while using fewer resources. And which is also less harmful to the environment and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

19. Support to smallholders and rural development is essential for achieving food security, and enhancing environmental performance, but large-scale systems can - and must - become more sustainable as well. This includes increasing investments in innovation and agricultural research and development, and especially by targeting smallholders. About 80% of the increase in food production that is needed to eliminate hunger and feed a growing world population will have to come from increases in yields and cropping intensity in developing countries. This requires the use of new technologies that are better adapted to the needs of smallholders and to local conditions.

20. However, we cannot limit sustainability to food production. We must also look at consumption patterns. We need to find ways to **eat healthier food, waste less and reduce losses** in transport and storage without having to increase the production so much. Roughly one-third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year — approximately 1.3 billion tonnes — gets lost or wasted.

21. One figure can help us to understand the benefits of reducing waste: every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food - 222 million tonnes - as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa - 230 million tonnes.

22. Food losses also occur in poor storage facilities and during long distance transportation, which is becoming more expensive as oil and energy prices rise.

23. Supporting local small-scale production to complement international food trade is an important way forward. Globally, there are about 500 million smallholder farms (with less than 2 hectares of land) in the developing world

and they are home to some 2 billion people. At the same time, around 70% of the population in extreme poverty live in rural areas.

24. People are hungry not because there is not enough food available but because they do not have the money to buy food. We cannot ask them to wait for the structural changes to happen, we need to provide immediate assistance while we work on those changes. The way to do this is by adding a long-term development dimension to our emergency interventions, as FAO and others are starting to do with positive results, for example, in Somalia.

25. Cash for work and cash transfer programmes can be a driving force for local growth, by stimulating local markets, especially when they are linked with supporting small-scale production.

26. When this happens, farmers have markets and incentives to produce, and the population has money to buy locally – and therefore to buy food that is fresher, healthier and respects cultural heritages. This produces a wide spill-over effect on the economy as a whole.

27. In rural areas, where there is hunger, we usually find economically stagnant communities. This type of support allows these communities to bloom.

28. In many cases, we can go even further by tying local production to institutional demands like school meal programmes, allowing small-scale producers to provide part of the food children need.

29. The cycle of planting, harvesting and consuming is what spins the economic wheels of millions of small communities. Supporting this process – through credit, technical assistance, guaranteed markets for small-scale producers and better infrastructure, combined with social protection – will not only reduce hunger but also spur broad-based economic and social development.

30. Ladies and gentlemen, FAO has been prepared to provide its contribution. It is ready to scale up its support by drawing on the best the Organization has to give and to work with governments and other partners that place ending hunger as a top priority on their agendas. To do so, FAO will promote the

integration of its services and knowledge and strengthen its presence in the field, improving its own decentralization.

31. The ultimate value of FAO and its work comes from its impact on the lives and livelihoods of people in its member countries. For this, FAO's normative and standard-setting work must be translated into country-level impact, its global knowledge products must lead to tangible change in policy and practice, and its programmes in the field must produce measurable and valuable results.

32. Excellencies, Ministers of Agriculture, FAO is ready to work with you to help our Member States to reach the goal of guaranteeing food security for their populations.

I look forward to seeing you in the Rio+20 Conference.

Thank you very much.