

## **Ministerial Roundtable on commitment and response to food and nutrition insecurity in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel**

### **1. Background**

The recurrent food and nutrition crises in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel pose severe challenges to vulnerable populations and can no longer be treated as short-term, limited events, caused by an occasional drought, but rather a manifestation of long-term, chronic problems that have not been adequately addressed. The number of people suffering from chronic food and nutrition insecurity, high levels of poverty and vulnerability due to drought is high and on the increase. The food and nutrition crises in these sub regions underscore the need for more concerted efforts to effectively link a coherent package of emergency interventions that respond to immediate needs, the systematic application of the different dimensions of the risk management cycle and the longer-term investments, policies and programmes to address the underlying structural constraints to improved welfare and development of more resilient livelihoods and agri- food systems.

### **2. Purpose**

The round table provided a forum for discussing, facilitating the dialogue among relevant Governments and Regional Organizations (RECs), engaging them in tackling the emergency and medium/long term situations in a twin-track approach, building resilience, formulating appropriate national policies and setting enabling environment for investments in the agricultural sector. It also offered an opportunity to share with the Governments and the RECs the FAO's renewed-commitment for a hunger-free Africa as a means to build awareness and strong partnerships.

### **3. Panelists**

- Honorable Wondirad Mandefro, Minister of State in charge of Agriculture, Ethiopia;
- Honorable Djimé Adoum, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Chad ;
- Honorable Allahoury Diallo Amadou, Ministre, Haut Commissaire for Food Security, Niger ;
- Mr. Mohamoud Abdirizak Dahir, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Somalia;
- Mr. Antoine N. Some, Director General INSAH-CILSS ;
- Mr. Oumar Coulibaly, Chief of Mission, Mauritania;
- Mr. Lucas Allinovi, FAO Representative for Somalia;
- Mr. Mohamed Moussa, Director of Agriculture and Environment, IGAD.

**Chair:** Laurent Thomas, ADG Technical Cooperation Department, FAO

**Facilitator:** Joachim Mbanza

#### **4. Outcome of the Round Table**

The Chair of the roundtable, in his introduction presented the food security and nutrition situation in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel, the objective of the roundtable, the emergency and development initiatives undertaken by FAO, and underlined some key factors of success and lessons learned. He seized the opportunity to reiterate FAO's commitment to support countries toward the development of better resilience systems for current and future generations. The facilitator addressed to the panelists three key questions for discussion, the outcomes of which are presented in the following sections.

##### **A. What explains the delays in response to the crisis while information was readily available?**

It came out clearly that the main causes of late response to the crisis are difficulties in mobilizing internal and external resources, and capacities, the fragility of security for intervention personnel as well as the lack of transparency and coordination among several actors.

##### **B. Which strategies or measures could be put in place to ensure a sustainable response to protracted crises?**

The following measures were enumerated by the panelists towards the prevention and management of crisis in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel:

- High political commitment and engagement in short-term response as well as linking emergency to development interventions, and building resilience;
- Implementation of strategies to harvest and preserve water for agricultural uses including crops, livestock and fisheries;
- Investment in irrigation /water management schemes and supply of adapted agricultural inputs;
- Investment in safety nets, capacities to produce and in public and social services;
- Improve producers' access to inputs such as quality seed, fertilizer as well as post-harvest food processing technologies;
- Establishment of monitoring and management mechanisms, e.g. regional council and networks for food security, national and regional food reserves, addressing the root causes of food crisis, mastering agricultural statistics, and ensuring efficient functioning of food markets, etc.

##### **C. What could countries expect from FAO?**

There was a rich discussion about what countries could expect from FAO. From the different interventions one can extract the following suggestions. FAO could:

- provide to countries technical expertise, institution building, monitoring capacities and creating platforms for national and regional exchange of knowledge;

- reduce administrative processes in time of response to crisis;
- assist in water infrastructure development and convincing global and development partners to invest in water;
- go beyond the formulation of strategies for agricultural development and food security, and development of investment plans; it could better assist in resource mobilization for investment in these areas;
- assist in capacity development, the promotion of action plans for environmental and resource management, cross-boundary issues, common trade rules, standards for food safety, and the establishment of a conducive economic environment..

The Chair summarized the session, noting that climate change is a real challenge today and tomorrow; countries, partners and other stakeholders have to be prepared. He underlined the need to:

- look at these challenges from the Disaster Risk Management perspective, Early Warning System, and actions that address the root causes;
- build resilience for communities and countries to bounce back from any crisis by working on climate change and adopting smart agriculture;
- Improve economic environment for farmers, private sector to invest in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, etc;
- build partnerships and alliances to bring the private sector in the value chain;
- use South-South cooperation mechanisms to fill gaps in expertise.

In concluding remarks, the Chair reiterated FAO's total commitment for an improved quality of support to countries and RECs, and to streamline its administrative processes, especially in time of crisis. In addition, he reaffirmed that, FAO together with other development partners and stakeholders can confidently make a difference in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel. Finally, he urged Government for more political commitment to be backed with investment, and for the allocation a higher ODA share to agriculture. He also called upon FAO to facilitate exchange of knowledge in view of the regional dimensions of the crisis for which evidence-based solutions are available.