



Statement by

**The Hon'ble Secretary Mr. Sherub Gyaltsen**  
**Ministry of Agriculture and Forests,**  
**Royal Government of Bhutan**  
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**Statement by the Hon'ble Secretary  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan**

Mr. Chairman  
Director General of FAO  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to state that the first five years of democracy - with all their attendant tests, hurdles, and learning experiences on the path to establishing a resilient, vibrant democracy have successfully completed. Through the political stability provided by our new governance system of democracy, we have been fortunate to be able to pursue a consistent and coherent development agenda. Furthermore, 10th Five-Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan is in the last stage of completion and we are in the process of finalizing the 11FYP with the National objective of achieving self-reliance through inclusive green socio-economic development. I am pleased to report that Bhutan has maintained rapid growth which on average, has exceeded 8% since 2005 without undermining our social, cultural or political values and without depleting our natural resource base.

As of now, many remote villages that had no access to electricity, roads and basic services now enjoy some essential comforts that we take for granted. The expanding networks of rural roads have given innumerable rural communities across the country greater access to essential services while providing market access and enhancing the economic and livelihood prospects. From this, you may surmise that Bhutan is well on track to achieve most of the MDG targets including that of reducing poverty by half.

The main thrust of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2008-2013) was poverty alleviation, including a substantial investment in the infrastructure, social and productive sectors. Further, to strengthen these efforts, policies and legislation have been put in place in support of poverty alleviation, including a broad-based poverty reduction strategy, a national food security policy, disaster management plans, and legislation governing land and other resources.

Mr. Chairman  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to report that “ The Poverty Analysis Report 2012” estimates the National Poverty Rate has been drastically reduced to 12% from 23.2 %.What is particularly heartening is that the percentage of rural population living below the poverty line has come down

significantly from a high of 30.9% in 2007 to 16.7% in 2012. The significant progress has been possible primarily due to the direct result of benefits of higher income from farm produce, including agriculture and dairy; convenient and efficient market access provided by the many roads completed in time for the last harvest season, and the many other poverty alleviation measures implemented.

However, poverty continues to be a serious concern for Bhutan despite strong pro-poor development policies and interventions. Hence, poverty reduction will still remain as one of the main development priorities for the 11th plan with particular emphasis on addressing multi-dimensional poverty, income inequalities, malnutrition and growing urban poverty

Our efforts in eliminating hunger and malnutrition have made tremendous progress in the last couple of decades, with a wide range of government policies and programs in place to improve the availability and access to food. Towards this, the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy has been drafted and is in its final stage of approval from the Government. The policy identifies measures to ensure availability of, accessibility to and enabling proper utilization of safe and adequate varieties of food to meet food requirements of the population at all times.

Mr Chairman  
Ladies and Gentlemen

A constant challenge to land use in the ecologically fragile Himalayas is to balance production with environmental preservation. While Bhutan is well known for its pristine environment, large areas under protected status, and healthy populations of many internationally threatened species of flora and fauna, we must also acknowledge that renewed efforts are needed to secure the sustainable use of agricultural land. Hence, agricultural intensification, mechanization, and commercialization create new demands for sustainable land management.

The government is also making concerted efforts to boost farm incomes by assisting farmers in increased market orientation, by creating market outlets, and by developing new marketing strategies and products. Bhutan will not be able to compete internationally in the production of bulk crops, given the limited land resources, the transportation costs and other reasons. However, we are targeting production of high value and low volume products and at taking advantage of our special ecological conditions.

Bhutan pursues environmental management as an integral part of its development plan. The National Forest Policy and the Constitution of the country require that at least 60% of the country remain forested at all times. Currently, over 16396.4 sq.km of Bhutan's land has been set aside as protected areas in the form of parks and biological corridors. Diversity in flora and fauna is one of the highest in Asia. Bhutan is also one of the few countries in the world

with net greenhouse gas sequestration capacity largely due to its vast forest cover and widespread use of clean energy.

Further, the policy reform for agriculture and biodiversity clearly states that Organic Farming will be a major focus area for Bhutan to promote as an Organic Brand. Among the agricultural sector development, organic farming will be promoted through use of viable alternative methods and inputs with a gradual phasing out of use of harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Although small and scattered efforts at organic promotion have only managed to make a start in growth, having an integrated approach to strategy development and planning is felt necessary. While promoting commercial production targeted towards export or major domestic markets will be the focus, production in remote natural by default organic production will form significant part of the rural food supply for nutrition and household food basket. This aspect, while economically not so important contributes towards the GNH philosophy of cleaner greener Bhutan.

However, agriculture is seen as a major contributor to the climate change problem rather than an agent of mitigation/adaptation. Agriculture sector has been blamed as a significant producer of greenhouse gases, frequent trigger to deforestation and major user of fresh water. The concept of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) that the Ministry is embarking on during the 11FYP seeks to reverse that pattern. Climate Smart Agriculture is not new to Bhutan; the practices of climate smart agriculture existed even before the planned development processes began. However, these practices will be enforced with more impetus and importance to achieve our goal of green socio-economic development and food security.

Mr Chairman  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to update here that, with the RGoB-FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) soon to be finalized; we have been able to identify key priority areas for collaboration for the next 5 years. The areas of focus has been identified based on the comparative advantages of FAO, while ensuring maximum synergy and complementary with the 11th Five-Year Plan and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Bhutan.

The CPF document is a result of extensive consultations held with a wide range of stakeholders and partners within the country as well as with FAO's relevant technical units of the regional office in Bangkok and its Headquarters.

By endorsing CPF, RGoB is committed to working in close collaboration with FAO to facilitate the achievement of the objectives and actions proposed in this document. CPF will be pursued in partnerships as broad as possible and in alignment with the joint efforts of RGoB and FAO for enhanced coordination and aid effectiveness.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation and gratitude to FAO for its continued assistance and fruitful collaborations as we pursue our goal of Gross National Happiness.

Allow me to conclude by wishing a successful 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference.

Thank you for your attention and Tashi Delek.