

His Excellency Mehmet Mehdi Eker

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is my pleasure to address this honorable audience on the occasion of 38th FAO Conference. I wish you a successful Conference.

We have only two years away from the final deadline of 2015 set for the Millennium Development Goals. Progress is uneven within and across countries in achieving and the triple challenge of hunger, malnutrition and poverty remains central in our agenda today.

Every individual has the right to access enough food and sufficient calorie intake in order to live a healthy life. Undernourishment continues to be a global problem. Today almost 900 million people worldwide are chronically undernourished. On the contrary, the number of people suffering from obesity and overweight is increasing worldwide. This dual challenge needs to be addressed.

World population is expected to rise to 9 billion by 2050 and global food demand will increase simultaneously. This will put further pressure on the existing challenge and will require sustainable management of the resources. Unsustainable systems are degrading the natural environment, threatening ecosystems and biodiversity that are vital for our future food supply.

Overcoming these challenges require the individual efforts of the Member countries as well as the collaborative global actions through international organizations.

Aware of this, my country, Turkey, takes measures to insure sustainability of its food systems for food security and nutrition. Small holder agriculture and rural livelihoods are among our priorities. In order to insure agriculture industry integration, the rural development investment support program is being implemented since 2006.

From an organization of irrigation systems, low interest credits are provided. Efficient use of land is among our main concerns. To this end, we adopted the law on soil protection and land usage, utilizing alternative energy sources is encouraged through grounds.

In our effort to overcome the undesirable effects of climate change, a drought test center was established for agriculture. Agriculture insurance system has been introduced with a view to reduce the impact of natural disasters. In this respect, 50% of the insurance bill is covered by the Government.

For the purpose of strengthening the supply and marketing chains, the agricultural cooperatives are provided development support. Prevention of food loss and waste is as important as increasing the production. Processing and storage of perishable crops are encouraged through the investment support program. A nation-wide campaign to prevent the food wastage was launched.

For the purpose of healthy nutrition and protection of public health, new regulations were put into effect to prevent unauthorized use of food additives and excessive use of salt. The school meat program is being implemented throughout the country. Seven million children benefited from this program in both 2012 and 2013.

Mr. Chairman, Delegates, I would like to state that Government of Turkey is ready to cooperate and collaborate with the international community through FAO to share all its experiences.

Before concluding my remarks, I would kindly request your valuable support for the election of Turkey as a Member of the Council. Thank you.