

Statement by His Excellency Petipong Pungbun Na Ayudhya

Minister for Agriculture and Cooperative of Thailand

Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience:

Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development

FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Ministers,

Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen

First let me congratulate would like to thank Dr José Graziano da Silva for his re-election as Director General of FAO. Also, let me thank the FAO for arranging this conference to address the key issue of rural poverty and hunger. Though Thailand has had substantial success in developing our strong agricultural sector, we, like most of the world still find too much of our rural population in poverty. We hope and expect the actions and decisions of this Conference will make a difference not just in policy, but also in promoting the types of actions on-the-ground that will make real and lasting changes to people's lives.

We need to find the right responses to poverty and hunger, so every person in the world can enjoy the basic right to food. Thailand strongly supports the theme of this Conference in addressing rural poverty and hunger through sustainable agriculture and by assuring social protection. The FAO and its Member States recognize the importance of social as well as environmental aspects as we strive to feed the world .

We must address hunger's root causes urgently, by providing real solutions for the millions of poor smallholder farmers and landless. The rural poor need access to sufficient resources, whether land, other natural resources, capital or technology. We must take the opportunity to redefine our food systems, fully recognizing how social and economic inequality impact food security and nutrition. I have no doubt that our joint efforts will successfully contribute to promote the food security agenda throughout the world.

Governments cannot do this alone. Thailand supports the increase of public-private partnership

investment in agriculture, built on partnerships to improve infrastructure, transfer of modern technologies, and facilitate development of domestic markets. Government policies need to assure fairness to all: while private companies should gain sufficient return on their investments, producers also need to earn adequate incomes, free from debt and exploitation.

Innovation and improvements are needed all along the food chain, to reduce food loss and waste, and to ensure safe and good quality food from producer to table. Thailand is working to improve our food quality and safety standards, for the health and nutrition of our own consumers, and to meet international requirements for food exports.

Distinguished delegates,

The world already produces enough food for everyone, but too much is lost or wasted, and not enough is able to reach those who desperately need more food. Considering that over 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry live in rural areas, it becomes clear that we need to promote agricultural and rural development to overcome food insecurity, including the distribution of resources and other means of production to those who do not yet have enough to support themselves. For most of the world, building the capacity of family farms to feed themselves is key to creating a virtuous cycle of inclusive and sustainable local development. We can then produce enough food where food is most needed, while generating more local income. This in turn will stimulate rural economies, helping bring non-farm households out of poverty and hunger as well.

We need to raise the environmental and social sustainability of food systems. Though food production has kept pace with population growth, it has been at significant environmental and human cost. Our forests are disappearing, lands degraded, and too many producers left impoverished. More attention needs to be given to production, processing and distribution systems that meet human needs without depleting natural resources. We need to shift to sustainable food systems that produce more with less environmental impact, reduce post-harvest loss and food waste, and treat the producers fairly.

I have no doubt that our joint efforts will contribute successfully to promoting food security, and reducing poverty and hunger, in all our countries.

Thank you for your attention.