

Speech by Sharon Dijksma, Minister for Agriculture of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, at the 39th Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, 9 June 2015

Ladies and gentlemen,

“Of course the farmer is the father of the world,” Gandhi said. And he was right. In the past two decades, global hunger has fallen sharply and food security has improved. Mainly due to the efforts of farmers.

According to the latest *State of Food Insecurity in the World*, the number of hungry people has fallen below 800 million. In developing regions, undernourishment affects 12.9% of the population, down from 20.3% a quarter of a century ago. Most of the countries monitored have met the Millennium Development Goal on reducing hunger.

Yet, millions of people still go to bed hungry every night, and many more suffer from malnutrition. So we cannot afford to sit back. Enormous challenges remain undiminished. And they will only grow larger as the global population continues to grow. By 2050, there will be more than nine billion mouths to feed. So food production must increase. At the same time, we need to boost resilience to climate change, improve the quality of farmland and reduce greenhouse emissions.

Gandhi believed that ‘our salvation can only come through the farmer’. But governments must lend a helping hand.

We can create an environment that promotes investment and innovation in agriculture. That encourages public authorities, the private sector and knowledge institutions to work together. So that new ideas can be put into practice.

In the Netherlands we have a long tradition of public-private partnership. Agri-business and the public sector work closely together to increase sustainable productivity growth

and nutritional value. In recent years, we've used this approach to improve food security around the world. By combining aid and trade: addressing social and environmental needs and using economic opportunities.

The Netherlands wants more of these partnerships, and wants to raise awareness. That's why the Netherlands took the lead in developing the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture and the Voluntary Global Network for Action on Blue Growth and Food Security. Next week we're hosting an international conference to discuss ways to stop food losses and waste. The focus will be on developing action-oriented partnerships, new financing mechanisms and models for good governance. This will contribute to food security and as we all know, food security is crucial for peace and security. Without food security, there is no lasting peace. That's why the Netherlands hopes to become a Member of the United Nations' Security Council in 2017

Ladies and gentlemen,

We're all aware that we need to act. And we all know what we have to do. Now it's time to put our words into action. We want our good intentions to produce visible results. I call on FAO to take the lead and engage the private sector in partnerships for development more often.

FAO has proven increasingly capable of doing this in recent years. It has embraced the multi-stakeholder approach. And it has become a more results-driven organisation that can be held to account for its actions. I'm convinced the new Programme of Work and accompanying budget will further strengthen the Organisation. So that FAO will indeed be able to lead the way towards food security for all. Never forgetting, of course, that it's the farmers who put their spades in the soil.

Thank you.