



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

2nd FAO ministerial meeting on food price volatility

Rome, October, 7th 2013

Statement by the Portuguese Minister of Agriculture and Sea,

Mrs. Assunção Cristas

Dear Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *meu Prezado amigo Professor José Graziano da Silva,*

Mr. Chairperson, Dear Colleagues and Ministers,

I would like to greet our Director General for convening this second ministerial meeting on **food price volatility**. It is no coincidence that we are also here today, opening the 40th Session of the Committee on World Food Security. I hope that our contributions may help to feed the debate of the Committee.

Given time constraints, I shall refrain from an analysis of the root causes of food price volatility and its importance. I will not refer either to the European Union's Common Agriculture Policy as a regulatory instrument. We know that action to combat price volatility involves stabilising the food supply, in a context of an increasing demand, driven by a growing world population, expected to be over 9 billion in 2050. I shall concentrate, therefore, in sharing with you 3 measures taken by the Government of Portugal on this regard.

Portugal has a food deficit of about 30% and it is also for that why we are committed **to achieve agri-food self-sufficiency by 2020 in gross value**, that is, to make exports rise above imports. This is about promoting



international trade and cooperation: we are and we will remain an open economy and also believe that we all need each other's goods in a growing interdependent world. Portugal's food exports have been increasing by more than 12% every year since 2000.

If consensus has emerged on the need of policy responses, it's far more controversial how we tackle that. Let me share with you three examples of my country:

① We created a strategic instrument: the **Land Bank**, that we are now developing. The idea is to list and publicize the arable available land in a web platform, so that investors and farmers may have access to relevant information. We are specially focussed on young farmers, as this Land Bank is also a crucial tool to foster job creation and fight against poverty. As I said when we launched this programme, we simply cannot afford wasting productive land. Inaction is far too expensive!

② We shall not be able to deal with price volatility if we do not work to increase the **resilience of our agricultural systems**, so vulnerable to climate changing and human action. On this regard, irrigation policies come on our top priorities. In the southern region of Portugal we are developing a large hydro- agricultural investment, covering more than 10 000 sq. kms, benefiting 1 million inhabitants. More than 1 billion euros have been invested in the last decade in an integrated solution for agriculture, environment and energy. **Alqueva dam** is the largest artificial lake in Europe, irrigating already 68 000 ha, providing public water supply to several urban areas, producing electricity and developing quality



tourism. We aim at a total of 120 000 ha of irrigated land by the time of its completion in 2015.

③ In the beginning of our term in office, we created a **Dialogue Platform** that brought together the players of the food supply chain: producers, processors and retailers. The Government worked as a broker or a facilitator on this *forum*, where approaches often departed from distant viewpoints but came closer in a self-regulatory exercise that allowed the adoption of rules accepted and cherished by all. The major step of this process was the increased transparency and confidence between stakeholders.

Dear Director General, Dear Colleagues and Delegates,

Portugal is working on the international level to fight against malnutrition, with a special focus on the **Portuguese Speaking Countries Community**, which has approved its own *Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security* in 2011, in Maputo. Over 28 million people are affected in CPLP. FAO has supported this initiative since the very beginning, a cooperation that I wish to highlight. As a member, Portugal contributes with funds to the initiative and provides knowledge, experience and expertise to support its implementation.

I hope that our meeting today and our reflections about best practices on food price volatility will contribute to enlighten the path ahead. That is our shared responsibility towards our communities in times of change.

Thank you.