

Written statement by Mr. Helir-Valdor Seeder, Minister of Agriculture of Estonia,  
at the HLC on World Food Security, Rome, 3–5 June 2008

1. Estonia regards the organization of the HLC as appropriate and timely. Food issue does not only concern the sector of agriculture or developing countries. Through high food prices, food shortage is telling on all of us. By the increase in food prices, we are getting a serious signal of the deficit of non-renewable energy.
2. However, talking about more than 800 million undernourished people in the world, we have to recognize that since the World Food Summit of 1996, the agriculture of the world has achieved great success and fed another 800 million people. But we must realize that in addition to the present undernourished we have to feed another 800 million people within the period of ten coming years.
3. Today we all want to live better than yesterday. To eat the food which is better and of higher nutritional value should be the right of all human beings. We should only be able to foresee what effect it will have on production and markets.
4. Agriculture has not caused the problem of food shortage but it can help to solve the problem. We have to consider that food is very expensive and its prices may stay at the current high level. Contemporary advanced agricultural production is not cheap, but there is no way back to the natural economy in the urbanized and globalized world. Intensive and sustainable agricultural production requires continual substantial investments.
5. We need a reliable, adequately and quickly reacting FAO able to forecast future developments. Food security for the whole world cannot be the duty of the FAO. But even then the FAO should be aware of what is happening in the sector of food, facing all the aspects of the problem (incl. the unpleasant ones), such as climate change, growth of population and welfare or the production of bio-energy, and alert the world, if necessary. Naturally, there should be close co-operation with all the FAO and other international organizations in many areas of activity. The FAO reform should guarantee better readiness in order to ensure higher reputation and reliability and not to give up functions to other organizations.
6. Monitoring the production of bio-energy should also be one of the functions of the FAO. The production of bio-energy is definitely not the main factor to be blamed for the shortage of food. Even today there is enough food in the world; the problem lies in the purchasing power of those suffering food shortages. In case of demand covered by purchasing power, the EU in general and Estonia in particular would be able to produce much more food. In Estonia, the utilization of unused arable land for the production of bio-energy would in no way harm the food situation in the world. Converting the residues of agricultural production into biogas will help to keep the environment clean in the whole world.
7. Estonia supports the preparation of a concrete action plan with clear measures and is ready to contribute to both crisis management and to the promotion of agriculture in developing countries, offering both expertise and experience.