

*Pls. check against delivery*

**30<sup>th</sup> Observance of World Food Day**

**Statement**

**by**

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**Rome**

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Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am honoured to be here on the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FAO.
2. FAO established World Food Day 30 years ago to provide a platform where all sectors of society can come together in partnership to focus attention and ensure that people everywhere have access to safe, nutritious and affordable food.
3. Today, I will not cite statistics regarding hunger. We all know the numbers and we understand the problem.
4. Today, I will talk about solutions.

5. Today, I am here to tell you that smallholder farmers can feed the world.

6. But they cannot do it alone. What they need is for rich and poor countries alike to invest in and support agricultural and rural development, creating the conditions to move poor rural people out of subsistence and into the marketplace.

7. Ladies and gentlemen:

8. In my many years of working in agriculture and rural development, two things have become increasingly evident. The first is that farming at any scale is a business, and smallholders and producers must be treated as entrepreneurs. The second is that businesses need clear linkages along the value chain, from production to processing, marketing, and ultimately to consumption. When these links are in place, wonderful things begin to happen.

9. In the last few months during my travels around the world, I have met dozens of people whose lives have been turned around with just a little bit of help through various forms of empowerment.
10. The story is the same everywhere. In country after country, through IFAD-supported projects, the lives of entire communities have been transformed.
11. For example, let us take the case of Elysée Nkundabagenzi of Rwanda. In her community, where people were extremely poor and malnourished, she and her neighbours received small loans, goats and cows and training on how to establish a kitchen garden.
12. And then there's Esther Siakanede in Zambia, where a smallholder irrigation scheme

has allowed her to grow cabbage and tomatoes for the Livingstone and Kalomo markets.

13. And finally the case of Pedro Tun, a smallholder farmer and the president of a producer's association in Guatemala. With backing from an IFAD project, the association members began farming high-value crops, French beans and onions. They purchased irrigation equipment, built a new storage facility, and worked with private-sector partners to get their produce to new markets.
  
14. Although the life stories and the regions of the world are different in the examples I have mentioned, the end results are the same: increased production and productivity leads to increased income, more meals per day, new homes, and better education and health for families and particularly children.

15. Elysée now produces enough vegetables and milk to eat and extra to sell in the market. She can now send her children to school and buy health insurance. And she has abandoned her grass hut to build a new house.
16. In Zambia, Esther has managed to send her children to secondary school, bought four goats and a cell phone. She has also managed to buy fertilizers for upland field crops and built a house with iron sheets.
17. Pedro and his colleagues in Guatemala now sell their produce to some of the biggest retailers in the world, including Wal-Mart.
18. These stories, along with others I have witnessed these past few months alone – from smallholder coffee growers in the Dominican Republic to cassava producers in Ghana – demonstrate that market-oriented agriculture

can transform lives and move people out of poverty.

19. But it cannot be done without the firm commitment of the many, many partners from NGOs, civil society, governments, the private sector, and smallholder farmers and their associations.
20. Smallholders and producers are not waiting for handouts. They can feed themselves, their communities and the world!
21. Ladies and gentlemen:
22. Today, let us reaffirm our commitment to truly stand United against Hunger. Let's invest in rural areas to ensure that they are places where the youth of today want to live tomorrow. Places where they can build healthy and prosperous communities free from hunger and poverty. Places from which they can feed the world.

23. I have seen it with my own eyes and I know  
it can be done. Enough is enough; Let us put  
our words into action!

24. Thank you.