

**Business and Industry Major Group
Statement on Africa
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting to CSD 17
26 February 2009**

Madame Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today African countries are facing major challenges in the wake of the food and financial crisis, but also have the opportunity to effect important changes. Agriculture is one of the main engines of growth in Africa. It is important that it remains at the top of the priority agenda. African agriculture is mostly made of millions of smallholders, in particular women, who should be at the center of policy making.

Business and Industry is calling for improvements to be made in 3 specific areas of action: Access to inputs and markets; access to training and knowledge; strengthening and capacity building of the private sector and small entrepreneurs.

Farmers need better access to inputs to increase their productivity, minimize losses and raise the quality of their produce. Although we do not have specific data on Africa, the World Bank estimates that in India, fruit and vegetable post harvest losses amount to 40% of total production, or the equivalent of one year of fruit and vegetable consumption in the UK.

But African farmers, workers, retailers, and agro-industries need access to better infrastructure, such as storage, transport and physical market facilities to be able to sell their products and to reduce losses. One particular obstacle for farmers seeking to access markets is the lack of market and price information. Initiatives which have pioneered the use of cell phones to help farmers access market information, should be replicated and scaled up. For example, Senegalese company Manobi successfully partnered with cell phone provider Sonatel to develop a platform which enables its users to receive price information via text messages as daily updates and to make further request for additional information if needed.

Continued progress needs to be made with regards to access to training and knowledge. In particular, increased access to integrated crop management training, through better public-private partnerships is essential. The plant science industry is heavily involved in providing access to training and conducts annual programs to reach African farmers. In 2007, CropLife Madagascar partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture to broadcast a series of safe use training radio programs for farmers, reaching 2 million farmers. Globally, over 350,000 stakeholders are trained in IPM.

To provide truly long term opportunities however, we must strengthen the private sector and entrepreneurs along the value chain. They constitute the future of agriculture and we must work through partnerships to equip them

with the tools and knowledge they need to become economic actors in their communities.

This statement supports the principle expressed in our policy document, Farming First.

Thank you.

Farming First

Safeguarding natural resources - furthering widespread adoption of sustainable practices of water and land use, such as conservation technology.

Sharing knowledge - while much knowledge to improve global agriculture already exists it often does not reach those farmers who could benefit most. Programs like village-based knowledge centre help.

Building local access - fundamental resources should be available to farmers to help them manage their production process more reliably, including mechanical tools, seed, fertilizer, and crop protection.

Protecting harvest - in many of the poorest countries, 20-40% of crop yields are lost because of inadequate pre- and post-harvest support. Likewise, vast quantities of food are squandered during production and consumption phases of the food chain.

Enable access to markets - farmers need to be able to get their products to market and receive equitable price treatment when they do by getting information like up-to-date market pricing even in remote areas.

Prioritise research imperatives - achieving sustainable agriculture requires intensified, continuous research, prioritising locally relevant crops, stewardship techniques, and adaptation to climate change.