



Towards the future we want:
Food Security and Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture and Ecosystem Management
Nourish People and Nurture the Planet

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On behalf of Jose Graziano da Silva,
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Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here representing FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva, who would have liked to be here in person, but is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances.

The world today faces major, interconnected challenges and conflicts: hunger and food insecurity, climate change, energy, persisting poverty, the economic crisis, all of which influence one another. Clearly, they require a comprehensive approach.

These challenges – and this is especially true for food security and nutrition – are too big for any single government or organization to tackle alone. We need to partner, coordinate and complement one another, so that our actions have greater impact.

That is why I am making this statement on behalf of all three UN food security and agriculture institutions based in Rome – FAO, IFAD and WFP. We are working together and are committed to partner with others to reach the future we want.

We have three main messages today.

Our first message is that hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition can be ended sustainably by 2025. It is within our reach.

This message is at the core of the common vision that emerged from the Global Thematic Consultation co-led by FAO and WFP, hosted by Spain and Colombia and supported by IFAD, the CGIAR system, and many member states, civil society and private sector stakeholders.

Food security and nutrition are cornerstones of sustainable development. Without them, people cannot live, learn, prosper or lead healthy and productive lives and societies cannot achieve their aspirations for innovation, environmental health, inclusive economic growth, human development and resilience to shocks and disasters.

Hunger, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water are both symptoms and causes of poverty. They contribute to insecurity, to poor education and health, and, to degradation

of natural resources especially water, land, forests and fisheries; and to other forms of scarcity, deprivation and conflict.

This is why we believe that ending hunger and, poverty and malnutrition should remain at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals – that ending hunger and malnutrition are prerequisites for sustainable and sustained economic development, reducing preventable deaths, better health, more and better education, women's empowerment, and efficient and effective natural resource stewardship, environmental wellbeing, resilience, peace and security.

In looking forward, I would like to recognize the importance of the Millennium Development Goals in stimulating important progress. The MDGs have been fundamental in encouraging many countries to concentrate their efforts to build a better world.

We have had success. The world is on track to meet the MDG poverty reduction target. And the share of the developing world's population who are hungry has fallen from 23 percent in 1990-92 to 15 percent in 2010-2012. Some forty countries have already met the target of halving the proportion of those who are hungry. Yet the MDG target 1 [the 'hunger target'] is not likely to be achieved overall in the next two and a half years without tremendous effort.

Our challenge is to ensure appropriate and comprehensive actions that tackle all of the multiple dimensions of food security and nutrition. After all, hunger is mainly caused by people not having access to food – including by those who play a major role in food production in rural areas of many developing countries. Although food production growth has slowed in recent years, globally there is still enough to feed everyone. Thus, we need to ensure that the world's poor have the means to obtain the food they need at reasonable cost and in times of crisis.

We must build on and embolden existing political will, mobilizing and supporting governments and society as they unite to end hunger, increasingly through the recognition of the fundamental human right to food.

The conviction that ending hunger is possible explains why a growing number of countries have embraced the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's Zero Hunger Challenge, issued moonduring the Rio+20 summit nearly one year ago. This challenge, for all stakeholders, presents a broad and aspirational vision, based on five ambitious pillars:

1. 100% access to adequate food all year round
2. No more stunted children under two years of age
3. All food systems are sustainable
4. 100% increase in smallholder farmer productivity and incomes
5. Minimizing food loss and waste of food

These broad pillars have been endorsed by a majority of member states by decision of heads of state and government. These countries have called for more comprehensive and focused efforts on the part of international partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainability is today a major global challenge, and will be an even greater challenge as the world population continues to grow. FAO estimates that agricultural output will need to increase by 60 percent by 2050 to feed a population expected to rise by two billion, surpassing nine billion. The challenge becomes even greater as the world copes with the mounting impacts and risks of climate variability and change. And to overcome this and the many complex and inter-related challenges ahead, we need to look hard at our production and consumption practices. Food security and good nutrition can only be sustainable if our way of life is sustainable.

Every year, the world loses or wastes somewhere between 30 to 50 percent of the food produced. Reducing loss, waste and inefficiency will increase food availability without needing to increase production as much.

We need to shift to more sustainable production approaches, to ensure higher yields with lower adverse environmental impacts. This is important because of the toll that is taken on the natural resource base. Furthermore, accelerating climate change is increasingly having adverse impacts on agriculture and food production.

Hence, our agriculture and food systems must be made sustainable and resilient. And we must sustainably manage our precious water, land and other natural resources, in the face of global warming and other challenges. Increased incidence of drought and flooding threaten livelihoods and incomes, and displace populations, especially those linked to agriculture.

In this scenario, it is crucial to strengthen the capabilities and resilience of vulnerable populations – women and men alike - so that they can better face increasingly frequent extreme weather events. And we need to incorporate resilience into local food systems, livelihoods and growth strategies in ways that will address price volatility, which is generally expected to become more common in future. We must extend and expand safety nets to vulnerable people to ensure that short-term crises do not undermine longer-term development gains.

But how do we increase resilience in agriculture and food systems?

This brings me to our second message: The key lies in building healthy and dynamic ecosystems that are more resilient to stresses, and better able to cope with -- and respond to -- climate change, extreme weather events, emerging diseases, shifts in population patterns and economic disruptions and shocks.

To accomplish this, five interdependent clusters of actions will need to be included within the post-2015 development agenda:

- Halt and reverse land degradation and desertification;

- Manage water resources sustainably and protect the forest, aquatic and mountain ecosystems that produce them;
- Increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon footprints of agriculture and rural sectors;
- Stop biodiversity loss; and
- Strengthen mechanisms and institutions to act preventively, before emergencies happen.

How is all this to be accomplished?

This brings me to our third message: It is time to invest in the critical agents of change: women and men, small producers and their organizations, family farmers, fishers, livestock keepers, forest users, rural workers entrepreneurs and indigenous peoples.

On the world scale, they make the difference. Their actions, choices and opportunities will determine our overall success or failure.

The evidence is unambiguous: Investing in agriculture has been and remains one of the most effective strategies for reducing hunger and poverty, igniting the engine of national development, and managing natural resources sustainably.

And today, the largest share of investments is made by small-scale farmers in the developing world: they invest more than four times what governments invest. They are truly our agents of transformation.

In a cruel paradox, 70 percent of the world's malnourished live in rural areas in developing countries. Many of them are small-scale subsistence farmers who do not produce enough food or gain sufficient incomes to feed themselves.

The post 2015 development agenda will thus need to capitalize on and support farmers' own investments by allocating resources for better infrastructure, better governance, more secure tenure rights and stronger collective action. We can use agriculture to promote win-win situations, by driving inclusive growth and poverty reduction in economically depressed rural areas.

By supporting small-scale production and producer organizations, and strengthening social protection, for instance through programs such cash vouchers, or food for work and cash transfer, we create an underlying basis for security that enables poor and rural households to try new methods, innovate and add value to their products, take risks and increase their own investments. Public investments in raising agricultural and rural incomes, linked with strengthening social protection, are crucial for food security – and for poverty eradication.

One important issue is to guarantee access and control by small-scale producers to the financial and productive resources they need, be they soils, seeds, land, livestock, water, or fish stocks. One tool for doing so is the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, the first comprehensive intergovernmental global instrument on tenure and its administration endorsed in 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security. Efforts

should be made to build on and enforce this and other existing negotiated frameworks, with the Committee on World Food Security as the foremost inclusive multistakeholder platform for food security and nutrition.

Ladies and gentlemen,

FAO, IFAD and WFP stand ready to work with Member States to help eradicate hunger and malnutrition – irreversibly and sustainably.

We embrace an integrated approach that allows people to access the food they need and break the cycle of malnutrition, whilst building livelihoods and resilience.

We must recognize that the investments made in nutrition today translate into increased economic opportunity and prosperity tomorrow.

We must acknowledge that even a short period of inadequate nutrition before the age of two has long-term consequences not only on the individual and household, but also the longer-term growth prospects of societies.

We need to recognize that progress in women's empowerment and gender equality strongly correlates with improved nutrition.

We embrace an integrated, ecosystem approach to agriculture, which halts land degradation and biodiversity loss, improves energy and water use efficiency, and re-centers investment on those most able to deliver a food secure poverty-free world: women and men small producers.

We must produce more with fewer environmental and economic costs, build resilience to stress, strengthen capacity to manage risks, and improve the benefits from and resilience of agriculture. Together, we can nourish people, while nurturing the planet.

We must work together as partners, and find innovative ways to involve all sectors of society, to strengthen collective responsibility, and in this way, move towards our shared aspiration of the eradication of hunger and food insecurity and improved nutrition for every man, woman and child.

Thank you very much.

1,961 words c. 20 minutes