



Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Seventeenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17)

General Comments on the Chairperson's draft negotiating document

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Delivered by Xenia von Lilien, IFAD Liaison Office, New York

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Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the 17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). IFAD welcomes the opportunity to share our views on the Chairperson's draft negotiating document with the Commission and we would like to commend the Chair for preparing a forward-looking and action-oriented document.

Madam Chairperson,

The thematic cluster addressed by CSD-17 could not be more timely neither could it be more pertinent. Though it is no longer in the headlines, the global food crisis is not over. In fact, the combination of underinvestment in agriculture over the past 30 years, along with continuing higher-than-average food prices and food price volatility combined with the effects of the financial crisis and the spreading global recession have increased the level of food insecurity worldwide. Today, close to 1 billion people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition compared to 825 million a decade ago. Climate change and population growth are also posing growing challenges to agricultural production, economic development and poverty reduction.

The response to the food crisis requires a twin-track approach that combines measures to provide food for the hungry today with investments in agriculture so that rural producers can feed themselves, their families and communities tomorrow.

Without agriculture resuming its rightful place as the backbone of economic development, we will not get beyond the current food crisis. In most developing countries, small-holder agriculture, in particular, is the key to sustainable growth and equitable wealth generation.

CSD-17 presents a unique opportunity to reach broad-based agreement on the actions necessary to tackle the global food security challenge and provide bold and forward looking guidance to all stakeholders for implementing short, medium and long-term measures to address hunger and malnutrition, increase agricultural productivity and promote sustainable rural development.

Madam Chairperson,

IFAD welcomes the call for expanded investments in agriculture, especially small-holder agriculture and for providing targeted support to small-scale farmers to boost agricultural production. Both national governments and donors need to make good on their commitments to increase support to small scale agriculture and ensure that agricultural and rural development and food security are prioritized in national development and poverty reduction plans and donor response strategies.

Strong agricultural sectors and rural communities that are productive and resilient are key not only for food security but also to political security on the streets and in the fields. We welcome provisions in the draft negotiating text that support the empowerment of poor women and men and seek to strengthen their resilience and enhance their coping mechanisms. Secure access to land for men and women; equitable access to financial services, technologies, information and markets; on and off-farm employment; and diversification of economic activities in rural areas are all critical components of rural development and we strongly support related proposals in the negotiating text.

Safeguarding the rights of poor people to productive assets is becoming increasingly important in light of current challenges related to climate change, biofuel production and foreign investments in agricultural land. CSD-17 can make an important and timely contribution toward promoting actions to safeguard secure access to land and other natural resources for poor women and men. By including appropriate measures in the outcome document, CSD-17 can help to strengthen norms and standards related to the protection and expansion of land rights – both individual and collective – for poor and vulnerable people, in particular small-scale rural producers, the urban poor, women and other vulnerable groups. Access to legal aid and the development of mechanisms for poor people to defend their resource rights are also important elements to ensure that poor people and their communities share in any development benefits derived for large-scale investments in agricultural land.

Madam Chairperson,

The CSD discussions and deliberations of the past two years provide a solid basis to reach agreement on a visionary and bold outcome document that will guide member states and UN system organizations in improving food security and agricultural production. But as you have reminded us many times: declarations don't feed people. Actions do. In the end, CSD-17 will be judged not by the number of paragraphs this meeting can agree on but by the effectiveness of initiatives and decisiveness of actions all of us take to ensure that poor and hungry people have food today and the tools to feed themselves tomorrow.

We at IFAD stand ready to support CSD-17 and look forward to working with all of you to ensure that the session will be a success.

Thank you.