

Panel Discussion on Agriculture Development and Food Security

New Cooperation for Global Food Security

9 October 2009

UN Headquarters New York

Concept Note

Pursuant to resolution A/RES/63/235, the Second Committee will hold a debate on “Agriculture Development and Food Security,” as part of its agenda during the 64th session of the General Assembly. IFAD, FAO, and WFP, in collaboration with UN-DESA will sponsor a panel discussion on 9 October 2009, to complement the Second Committee’s debate.

Global attention to agricultural development and food security has been renewed as a result of several factors:

- 1) **The world has entered a new era of global food and nutrition insecurity.** According to FAO, an additional 100 million people will suffer from hunger in 2009 bringing the total to 1,017 million hungry people, the highest number ever recorded. More than 2 billion people suffered from micronutrient deficiencies, even before the food prices increased and the global economic and financial crisis erupted. Poverty and hunger cannot be reduced without investing in agriculture and nutrition. Smallholder farmers, men and women, have a central role to play in achieving food and nutrition security and pro-poor agricultural and economic growth. Agricultural development needs to be complemented by food and nutrition assistance.
- 2) **Agriculture, food and nutrition security play a vital role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).** Agriculture is the world’s major source of food and the sector provides employment, income and livelihoods for the majority of the world’s poor people. The achievement of the MDGs, in particular the goals and targets related to poverty and hunger, education and child mortality are closely related to agricultural development and food security. There is a pressing need to implement actions to minimize the impact of the food crisis on sustainable development and on achievement of the MDGs. Secure access to nutritious food and to natural and productive resources (land, water, technology, markets) is central to the achievement of the MDGs. Women play a particularly important role in food production and household food security and need to be recognized and supported as critical actors and allies in achieving the MDGs.
- 3) **Strengthening the linkages between agriculture, food and nutrition security is essential if levels of nutrition are to be raised.** Most of the world's poor and nutritionally vulnerable people are highly dependent on agricultural and rural development for improving their household food security and alleviating and preventing malnutrition. Yet, increases in agricultural production and productivity alone are not always sufficient in fighting hunger and malnutrition. Food and nutrition assistance to those in need, for example, through the distribution of vitamin and mineral supplements, micronutrient fortification, new nutritious products and other interventions complements initiatives to address longer term root causes of hunger and malnutrition. This requires support for an appropriate mix of policies, institutions and infrastructure that support agricultural-based livelihoods, strengthen social protection systems and protect and promote food and nutrition security. Attention needs to be given to increasing the production and consumption of adequate and nutritious food and ensuring that the poor have access to a nutritionally adequate diet.
- 4) **World population is projected to grow to nearly 9.2 billion by 2050.** To feed a population of more than 9 billion, global food production must nearly double. Climate change will impose challenges on agriculture’s ability to meet these demands. Price volatility may continue in the future,

since climate change is likely to increase the level of uncertainty regarding food production and food access. As a result, by 2020 almost 50 million additional people may be at greater risk of hunger as a direct consequence of climate change. Higher productivity requires increasing investments in agriculture, adapting farming methods, strengthening social protection, including risk management instruments, improving rural and rural-to-urban infrastructure, use of natural resources, as well as more skilled and better trained farmers with special attention to women as the main agricultural producers in many countries.

The Second Committee debate is being held against the backdrop of a series of high-level international talks that have served to heighten awareness of the present and projected global food security situation, provided forums for building consensus about a global response, and a platform for announcing financial commitments to support food assistance and to increase agricultural productivity. The growing convergence on the necessity to re-focus development policy, practice and resources towards the challenge of global food security focuses primarily on *what* needs to be done. To accelerate action, agreement must now focus more deeply on *how* the global response is to be effected.

The purpose of the panel discussion is to provide intellectual input and thematic guidance for the Second Committee debate on agriculture development and food security (scheduled for 22 October 2009) by focusing on two distinct trends that are both promising and critical for the understanding of how to improve global food security in the short, medium and long term and how to achieve the MDGs and poverty and hunger reduction goals beyond 2015.

- **The importance of international cooperation for global food security:** International cooperation is a critical element for global food security. Many developed countries have recently announced commitments for a reinvigorated engagement and increased investments in agricultural development and food security. Moreover, South-South cooperation focusing on agricultural development and food and nutrition security is becoming a powerful source of funding and results in economic investment, technology transfer, social protection and mutual learning among developing countries.
 - *How can developed and developing countries more effectively work together towards the goals of reducing poverty and hunger and achieving global food security?*
 - *What practices and actions have shown positive results and might be replicated or scaled up?*
 - *Where remain challenges?*
- **The emergence of new voices, actors and partnerships in the field of agricultural development and food and nutrition security:** National governments are principal actors in promoting agricultural development and ensuring food and nutritional security. Yet, the field of agriculture, food and nutrition is increasingly attracting an array of new actors (larger foundations, non-traditional donors, private investors, entrepreneurs, sovereign wealth funds) and existing actors are finding innovative ways to make their voices and interests heard leading to the development of new partnerships among a variety of actors.
 - *What steps need to be taken to strengthen national capacities to establish and maintain food security partnerships?*
 - *How can synergies among the diverse interests and actors be created and strengthened ultimately leading to global food security?*

The above topics will be discussed by 3-4 panelists followed by an interactive Q&A and comment session. The Chairman of the Second Committee will preside over the event.