

Presentation of TST Issue Brief on Sustainable Agriculture

Statement by Carlos Seré, Associate Vice-President, International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), 22 May 2013

- The topic of this brief covers an issue of major importance to the agenda of the Open Working Group, because sustainable agriculture plays a central role in driving sustainable development in its three dimensions.
- Today, agriculture broadly speaking – including crop and livestock production, fisheries, and forestry – provides jobs, food, and other goods and services, to most of the women and men on our planet who live in poverty or just above the poverty line. As we know, GDP growth from this sector is, on average, at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth generated in other sectors, and even more effective in resource poor, low income countries.
- Agriculture is also a critical engine of growth in its own right. And of course, it is the sector from which the world at large – especially an increasingly urban world - derives food, non-food products like feed, fiber, and fuels, and environmental services – including services linked to climate change mitigation.
- Agriculture today is at a crossroads. It needs to become vastly more productive, efficient in its use of natural resources, and resilient to a range of shocks and pressures. It needs to provide decent incomes and employment opportunities to rural people – especially youth. It also needs to reduce its GHG emissions and provide other ecosystem services, such as water provision, maintenance of biodiversity, flood and disease control and maintenance of soil fertility. And it needs to result in less waste of produce.
- To do so, there is a need to shift to more sustainable agriculture, supported with adequate policies, investments, and tools. Policies and investments in agriculture R&D are key for this. Enhanced investment in conserving, using and developing biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture is also critical. So are policies that provide incentives to farmers and agribusinesses to adopt sustainable technologies and practices, and institutional capacity to design and implement these policies. Everywhere, the risks confronted by farmers need to be reduced. Ensuring secure land tenure arrangements – including for women farmers – is essential for this. Investing in farmers' education is also of major importance.
- Today there is broad consensus on the need for more sustainable strategies for agriculture. Existing commitments include the outcome document from Rio+20 ("The future we want"), which: "reaffirm[s] the necessity to promote, enhance and support more sustainable agriculture... that improves food security, eradicates hunger and is economically viable, while conserving land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, biodiversity and ecosystems and enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters".
- Under an SDG agenda, the issue of sustainable agriculture can be addressed in its different dimensions, including increasing productivity, promoting decent farm incomes and jobs, promoting healthy ecosystems, and improving nutritional value and safety of food. To achieve this, the agenda should also

look at how to put in place the needed drivers and processes to foster a shift towards sustainable agriculture globally and in different country contexts.

- What do we want to see come out of a comprehensive agenda for sustainable agriculture? Increased agricultural productivity and efficiency of resource use; increased incomes for agricultural households and decent rural employment opportunities; healthy, sustainable and productive ecosystems; improved availability and distribution of quality food; less post-harvest losses and waste; agricultural commodity prices that reflect social and environmental costs; food production systems that are more resilient to shocks and changes; food security concerns addressed in trade regimes and trade policies; agricultural policies that promote local and regional agricultural markets; and agricultural policies that value and draw on indigenous and local knowledge.
- Achieving these multiple objectives will require a range of measures: inclusive platforms for policymaking and programme design; secure land tenure arrangements for rural people, particularly women; better mechanisms and incentives for technology sharing; improved provision of public goods; sustainability considerations and incentives mainstreamed into public planning; integrated approaches to natural resource management; better markets for ecosystem services; an end to policies that incentivize or permit unsustainable use of natural resources; and universal access to sustainable energy.
- At the international level, it is also important to strengthen governance of natural resources and to address trade-distorting policies and protectionism with negative impact on sustainable agriculture.
- In terms of formulating possible goals or targets in this area, the brief presents a number of recommendations for the OWG.
 - First, that the SDG framework should recognize the role of sustainable agriculture as a driver of poverty eradication and development.
 - Second, giving due consideration to the link between sustainable agriculture and eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
 - Third, providing a platform where stakeholders can discuss to define common goals around sustainable agriculture and various parts of the SDG agenda. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and its high level panel of experts may play an instrumental role in such a process.
 - Fourth, articulating linkages between sustainable agriculture and food security and nutrition or other goals (e.g. around the food/water/energy nexus) through indicators or principles associated with relevant goals. These principles could be used to guide the national development of action plans for achievement of the SDGs, where sustainable agriculture can play an important role towards achieving the goals
 - Promoting an integrated approach is essential. This can be done, in the case of a goal on sustainable agriculture, with indicators relating to

energy and water, or through principles facilitating integrated decision-making processes on the various elements of each cluster.

- Fifth, developing one or more global targets with a set of core indicators, with timelines and additional indicators adaptable to national circumstances in the area of sustainable agriculture