

As delivered

INTERVENTION

BY

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DEVELOPMENT

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Madam Chairperson,

It is a great honour for me to deliver this statement on behalf of India at this august gathering on the subject of Agriculture and Rural Development.

At the outset we associate ourselves with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77.

The learned panel has already highlighted the issues and suggested possible approaches and policies to face the challenges of global food security.

Madam Chairperson,

The Secretary General's report has rightly pointed out that a large number of rural poor in the world depend on agriculture for their survival and livelihoods.

In order to meet demand of fast growing global population, food production would have to be expanded, perhaps even doubled. At the same time there are challenges of climate change, high energy costs and a global trend of rising food prices, which pose serious threats to agriculture, particularly in the developing countries.

The decline in the global foodgrain production due to droughts and crop failure in a number of countries, diversion of area under food crops to other commercial crops in the recent past, and stagnant productivity have thrown serious challenges to agriculture. Timely action is required to address these challenges in order to reduce hunger and poverty, to improve rural livelihoods and to achieve sustainable development.

Madam Chairperson,

India's livelihood landscape is largely rural in character, where agriculture remains one of the dominant components of the economy. India has highly diverse cropping systems, which explains

variation in agricultural growth and productivity across different regions of the country.

The agriculture sector contributes about 18 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); about 11 per cent of total exports; provides employment to around 58.2 per cent of the work force and is the single largest private sector occupation. India has been self sufficient in foodgrain production since the sixties as a result of the green revolution. But recent changes in climate have impacted production of wheat to some extent.

Madam Chairperson,

India has taken various initiatives both at policy as well as programme levels to address the current constraints facing the agriculture sector, i.e. to improve growth rate and enhance food security by increasing production of foodgrains. This year, India food-grain production reached an all time high of 227 million tonnes, which is about 10 million tonnes more than last year's production.

Our major recent initiative on policy front is the 2007 National Policy for Farmers (NPF) which focuses on the well-being of farmers. The policy comprehensively addresses the issues of improving the economic viability of farming through substantially improving net income of farmers; promoting sustainable use of natural resources like soil, water, bio-diversity; empowering small, marginal and vulnerable farmers; appropriate price and trade policy mechanisms; and ensuring food and nutritional security. Sustainability issues such as asset reforms, conservation of biodiversity, enhancing water use efficiency and conservation of prime farmland in agriculture, including re-settlement of displaced farmers, are at the core of the Policy.

Madam Chairperson,

India has also launched a National Food Security Mission (NFSM) for enhancing production of rice, wheat and pulses by 20 million tonnes by 2012. In addition, we have constituted a National Rainfed Area

Authority (NRAA) to address all aspects of sustainable and holistic development of rainfed areas by converging and synergizing numerous ongoing programmes.

To mitigate the vulnerability of farmers to natural calamities, we have introduced comprehensive crop and weather insurance schemes. Information on market intelligence and price analysis is being provided to different stakeholders using ICTs.

Madam Chairperson,

In today's globalised world, it is argued that trade is a powerful engine of economic growth, which is essential for poverty reduction. However, as noted in the Secretary General's Report, agricultural trade liberalization alone would not address the problems of hunger and poverty. While liberalizing agricultural trade, the interests of vulnerable and resource-poor producers and farmers are required to be protected. Trade liberalization cannot succeed if in the process food security and livelihood security, especially of the vulnerable producers and the poor, are compromised. India has taken a stand in WTO to protect the interests of vulnerable farmers and their food security and livelihood security concerns. The modalities of special products and special safeguard mechanism agreed for ensuring food and livelihood security and rural development concerns are, therefore, crucial for developing countries like India.

Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, particularly for those engaged in agriculture, has been the major focus of the work of the Government. A National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture (NGRCA) serves as a focal point for convergence of all gender-related issues / mainstreaming concerns in agriculture, while the Women Component Plan has been introduced to ensure resources/benefits to women under all Beneficiary Oriented Schemes. The National Policy for Farmers has various policy provisions for empowering women in farming and allied sector activities.

As pointed out by the learned panel of experts, we agree that higher investment in the Agriculture Sector is needed to address the decline in growth rate through application of science and technology. There is an urgent need for international collaboration in frontier areas of science and technology i.e. conservation and exploitation of genetic resources as well as development of new and improved varieties of crops to face the onslaught of climate change. Exchange of information on new/improved technologies and experience of successes are crucial for both developing and developed countries. CGIAR Institutions need to be strengthened which have earlier played a key role in green revolution.

Thank you.