

3rd Global Conference on Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security and Climate Change

Johannesburg, South Africa, 3-5 December 2013

Dear Excellency, Minister Tina Pettersen

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure to be with you today and represent FAO at this conference.

Previous conferences have been fundamental to focus attention and build international consensus on the key challenges related to food and nutrition security, agriculture and climate change.

This conference has to ensure that consensus is transformed into action.

Over the past 50 years, the agriculture sector has had to keep pace with the world's growing population which has doubled, while the proportion of people that go hungry has decreased. This achievement has, however, come at considerable cost.

Agriculture and food production have put tremendous pressure on natural resources. Unsustainable land use practices have resulted in the degradation of the environment, loss of biodiversity and erosion of ecosystem services. An estimated 25% of the world's land is, or is in the process of, becoming highly degraded; 13 million hectares of forests are lost each year; and an estimated 30% of fish stocks are over-exploited, depleted or recovering.

Climate change adds a new challenge for agricultural and rural development. The poorest countries, and especially the least developed countries (LDCs), are often among the most impacted by the adverse physical impacts of climate change, and even more in economic terms, due to the importance of agricultural sector to their economy.

Climate change is hitting hardest the most vulnerable and is a considerable threat to already fragile ecosystems and natural resources on which they depend.

Particularly high impacts are being felt in food insecure regions such as in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

When we also consider that the food supply must increase by 60% by 2050 in order to meet a world population of 9 billion, and we already have an estimated 840 million people that are undernourished, it is clear that we can no longer continue business as usual.

Ladies and gentlemen, we face an enormous challenge of providing adequate food and nutrition for all people now and in the future, while maintaining and restoring the natural resource base upon which food systems and rural livelihoods depend.

We have no option, we need to meet this challenge.

This is why in 2010, in the Hague at the first of these conferences, FAO proposed through its technical document the concept of climate smart agriculture (CSA).

This concept had evolved from previous FAO work on the need to develop synergies to produce more in a sustainable manner.

We firmly believe that the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors can achieve the 3 main objectives of CSA:

1. sustainably increasing agricultural productivity, incomes and livelihoods, especially of the most poor and vulnerable;
 2. adapting and building resilience to climate change;
- and
3. reducing and/or removing greenhouse gases emissions.

Since the creation of CSA in 2010, multiple stakeholders have adopted the concept. Just to give you an example, two weeks ago in Warsaw, the UN Secretary General in his speech in the high level segment noted to participants that CSA was the way forward in combating climate change and creating a sustainable future.

However, let us not delude ourselves, there is no quick fix, CSA is not a single specific agricultural technology or practice that can be universally applied. It is an approach that is context specific and requires interventions which are tailored to the specific local social, economic and environmental conditions and needs.

To ensure that we achieve the multiple objectives and benefits of CSA we therefore need to provide stakeholders with the data, tools and the capacity to make the required assessments, select the appropriate options and make the right choices.

In addition, to ensure broad participation and adoption of CSA, especially of smallholders, an enabling environment needs to be created through appropriate policy, finance, institutional and governance mechanisms

Clearly this requires collective management within landscapes and the integration of different production systems and natural ecosystems.

To achieve such an approach requires the collaboration and collective decision making of the different actors within the landscape who will most likely have different requirements, objectives and time frames.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

CSA is complex but it is **definitely** possible and FAO, often in partnership with other organizations, is supporting its member countries in their efforts. For example, with the financial support of the government of Sweden and in partnership with IFAD, WFP, World Bank and CGIAR, FAO developed a CSA sourcebook to guide users through the CSA concept. The sourcebook provides guidance on landscape approaches, production systems, practices and the institutional, financial and policy options required to create an enabling environment.

FAO is also supporting the creation of a knowledge platform on CSA to support the exchange of knowledge and promote collaboration.

FAO has also brought together the expertise from its different technical divisions to provide a complete CSA package and support mechanism and is now working with various partners in supporting the implementation and adoption of CSA in different countries. For example, through its “EPIC” initiative, which is funded by the EU, FAO is providing technical economic and

policy advice to countries such as Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia. In these countries ministries of agriculture, environment and finance are working together to achieve common national policies and programmes to support CSA adoption.

However a lot still needs to be done and this conference can help in meeting these requirements, I want to therefore close with 6 key messages on what is required to move forward and scale up CSA:

1. We need a better understanding of country needs but in particular the needs of local practitioners to be able to adopt a CSA approach.
2. There needs to be an improvement in the evidence base and assessment tools to allow stakeholders to assess options, identify tradeoffs and prioritize interventions.
3. Providing practices and technology options is not enough. We need to create an enabling environment for CSA adoption. We therefore also need to improve our understanding and ability to evaluate barriers to adoption and compile the tools and knowledge to identify suitable solutions.
4. Overcoming barriers must include providing producers, especially small holders and women, access to services, incentives, tenure rights and safety nets to allow long term investments required for some CSA approaches.
5. Based on the points above we need to guide science and research to ensure it develops the knowledge and tools required by practitioners and policy makers. We need to create multidisciplinary fields of work to ensure that economic, social

and environmental issues are addressed together in a coherent manner.

6. We must mobilize and pool financial resources to ensure that the limited public funds available are used in the most optimal way possible and also mobilize private sector investments. We need to eliminate perverse financial incentives and redirecting funds in ways that promote CSA.

Finally to achieve all the above points requires fundamentally one key component and this is collaboration. Being at this conference gives us a great opportunity to create the partnerships to make CSA a reality.

I hope in the next 3 days we will have the opportunity to discuss the points above, elaborate them, come up with priorities and put together collaborations to start addressing some of these gaps.

Finally I would like to conclude my greatly thanking the Government of South Africa and especially the Minister Tina Peterson for hosting the conference and giving us this opportunity to move forward on this important topic.

I wish you all successful and fruitful conference.

Thank you.