

Regional Workshop on
“Ensuring Resilient Food Systems in African cities”
Nairobi, 13-14 December 2011

Opening

Mr Dan Rugabira – FAO KE, on behalf of Mr Castro Camarada – FAO SFE

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

I welcome you as FAO representative in Kenya on behalf of Mr Castro Camarada, FAO representative of Subregional Office for Eastern Africa. First of all, I thank you all for having accepted to participate in this very important workshop. We are about 60 participants from 10 countries coming here even within a short notice.

I want to thank the FAO “Food for the Cities” multi-initiative for having proposed to organize this workshop for the Eastern Africa subregion, and particularly in Nairobi. It is a great and timely opportunity. The Mazingira institute is a partner organization. I particularly want to thank Davinder Lamba.

I also thank our FAO teams in Kenya and Rome as they have handled all the logistic matters, particularly in the last days.

The Horn of Africa is currently in a important crisis regarding food and nutrition security. FAO, along with the national governments and with many other partners (other UN agencies, donors, NGOs), is contributing to tackle this crisis and bring relief to the populations. Urbanization challenges are part of the issues we have to address now. Urbanization will also be a major trend in the years and decades to come.

Urban issues come up with many dimensions, linked together:

1. Food and nutrition security issues in cities, particularly for the urban poor, often living in slums, with the double burden of malnutrition (obesity and deficit in micro-nutrients), while urban dwellers are experiencing a nutrition transition. Urban food insecurity has become vocal in 2007-2008 and at the beginning of this year. We need to acknowledge the reality of food insecurity for urban dwellers and develop policies to address it.

2. Growing cities in the region, both big cities and medium size cities, with impacts on natural resources and agricultural lands. It needs better governance and planning,
3. Migration from rural areas to cities, including trans-boundary migrations, due to conflicts, natural disasters and impacts of climate change which compounds the issue. Disaster Risk Reduction policies are needed.

Each country of the sub-region and, within the different countries, each city experience different realities. It is therefore important to understand the local issues and build local strategies. It needs the mobilization of all the partners: UN organization, national and local governments, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), academics, private sector... The diversity of the participants of the workshop will enable to get the perspectives and proposals from all of you (CSOs, farmers,). It is a sure way to get inputs for the food system.

This workshop takes place almost 10 years after a regional seminar on “Feeding Cities in the Horn of Africa” that took place in Addis Ababa. It has become all the more urgent to join forces. Within 10 years, all stakeholders have developed some experience and developed capacity to address urban issues in the continuum between development and crisis context. We can see it from the diversity of the presentations on the programme of the workshop.

However, most of the time, this information is not easily accessible for decision makers. Considering the challenges ahead related to urbanization in our region, we need very concrete and operational tools and responses. I am therefore looking forward to the conclusions in order to mobilize local actors.

I wish you very fruitful sessions.