

REMARKS OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN AT THE OPENING OF THE “PROMOTION OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR HEALTH: AFRICAN REGIONAL WORKSHOP” HELD AT MOUNT MERU HOTEL, ARUSHA, TANZANIA ON 26-30 SEPTEMBER, 2011, READ BY GERALD RUNYORO (FAO-TANZANIA)

Honourable Minister for Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives of the
United Republic of Tanzania;

Honourable Regional Commissioner for Arusha Region;

Representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Education in
Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar;

Participants from various organizations in Tanzania, the East Africa Region, the
rest of Africa and other continents;

Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure and an agreeable duty for me to take the floor this morning on the occasion of the opening ceremony of this African Regional Workshop on the Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health.

On behalf of FAO I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives of Tanzania for accepting to host and organise this event.

I thank also all the participants who, despite their busy agendas, have agreed to come to this workshop to bring their contribution to this joint FAO-WHO initiative for promoting fruit and vegetables in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. In particular I thank all of you who have travelled long distances from outside Tanzania and Africa. I believe colleagues from Tanzania will accept to join me to welcome you to Tanzania and specifically to Arusha.

Our sincere thanks are due to the organisations that have co-sponsored and supported the organization of the workshop. These include the World Health Organisation, the Global Horticulture Initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the French Centre for International Cooperation on Agronomic Research for Development (CIRAD) and the Horticultural Development Council of Tanzania (HODECT).

Honourable Minister and dear participants,

As you are all aware, there exists many and clear evidences manifesting the low and inadequate consumption fruit and vegetables in Africa. This situation is attributed to a wide range of reasons on both the supply and demand sides of fruit and vegetables including constraints in production, distribution, processing, cultural habits and low purchasing power, just to mention a few. It is in this regard that FAO, in close collaboration with WHO, has made important investments in recent years with a view to sensitizing the international community about the positive linkages between the adequate consumption of fruit and vegetables, health and wellbeing. We have been very satisfied to see how the coalition of national and international partner organisations that have joined this initiative has continued to grow and gain strength.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The aim of the PROFAV workshop is to refine and apply a framework of intervention for promoting fruit and vegetable consumption at national level. For this to happen, however, increased consumption has to take place at the household and individual levels. The presence here of policy makers representing several different sectors - including health, nutrition, agriculture, horticulture, and education - from the 22 English-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa testifies to the importance that you attach to the theme of the workshop.

Over the next five days you will be examining, in a structured way, the multiple problems linked to boosting the production and the consumption of fruit and vegetables across the diverse reality of our region. It is my belief that the rich diversity of your backgrounds will enable you to accomplish this in an interdisciplinary and collaborative manner, with facilitation from the sponsor organisations

The challenge before us is to develop a tool that is adapted to the needs of local actors and that helps us to address issues around production and post-harvest management of fruit and vegetables including storage, processing, distribution, marketing and consumer awareness – while keeping a focus not only on the questions of access and availability but also the quality and safety of the produce.

In the follow up to this meeting we trust that we will be able to provide FAO's support to the countries of the region in their efforts to promote the improvement of the horticulture sector from the field to the table.

Honourable Minister and dear Participants,

To conclude my remarks I wish you a successful workshop and a pleasant stay in Arusha, especially those of you who have come from afar.

Thank you for your attention.