

Statement by the Chair of the Consortium Board to the Committee on World Food Security

Mr. Chairman, I would like to limit my intervention to three main points:

The first point is to highlight the global recognition that CGIAR international agricultural research has had a good track record since its inception. It has provided value for money with high returns on investment with tangible benefits far exceeding costs. It has made a major contribution to agricultural development in general and world food security concerns in particular and has contributed to improved livelihoods for the rural poor.

This contribution far exceeds the generally well-known success stories associated with the Green Revolution in Asia or the control of the cassava mealy-bug in Africa. These success stories extend to vast areas of research such as crop genetic improvement through the development of drought, flood, and salinity tolerant crops; the breeding of plants resistant to pests and diseases; the global dissemination of new varieties; the breeding of rich in nutrient varieties known as bio-fortified crops. They have also been associated with the improvement of natural resource management such as soils, water, forests and fisheries, and conservation of biodiversity, contributing to sustainability and resource efficiency. It has also played an important role in access to genetic resources, a high percentage of cultivated area under the ten most important food crops are improved varieties with CGIAR ancestry. It has also contributed to the design of policies focused on poor people or addressing gender progress.

So, the first message I would like to leave with you is that high quality agricultural research is certainly part of the solution of world food security problems. Research is a multi-year undertaking that requires long term stability of finance and this issue needs to be properly addressed. Much greater attention and efforts should be devoted to ensure that the benefits of research reach the farmer.

The second point, is some information regarding the current process of CGIAR reform. Agricultural research has traditionally focused in increasing production and productivity to meet the needs of an increasing world population. It has also being directed to poverty alleviation. In our days, agricultural research needs not only to continue to address these problems, but also to respond to an increasingly challenging external environment characterized by global food price crises, financial and economic crises, natural resources crises (water scarcity, land degradation, deforestation, and depletion of fisheries resources), as well as climate change. As a result, the CGIAR has undertaken a major revision on the ways it operates. There is an urgent need for reform aimed at more comprehensive and holistic solutions and integrated approaches, as well as to respond to changing needs and demands. "Business as usual" is no longer possible. Without getting into details, the CGIAR reform embodies institutional and governance changes; new approaches on scientific work and greater attention to partnerships. The main goal of the reform is that research should be results-oriented, leading to greater impact on the ground on the three major CGIAR objectives of poverty alleviation, world food security, and environmental sustainability.

On the institutional front, the reform consists on the establishment of the Consortium Board and a Fund Council. The Consortium Board defines policies, strategies and priorities; ensures collective actions by the fifteen Centers aimed at the development of joint programmes known as CRP (Consortium Research

Programmes); promotes greater partnership with stakeholders in order to achieve results and meet the needs of farmers. The Consortium speaks with one voice in the name of all the Centers.

The Fund Council will harmonize the donors' funding based on a Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), and ensure greater efficiency in the allocation of resources, as well as the reduction in reporting requirements by Centers.

The scientific work has been designed to tackle the challenges we face. Fifteen CRPs have been developed collectively by Centers in close consultation with stakeholders. They cover a very comprehensive field of subjects aimed at improving the livelihood of the poor and vulnerable. They embrace seven thematic areas: 1- Integrated agricultural production systems; 2- Policies, institutions and markets; 3- Global alliances in crop to improve food security covering not only the three traditional crops (rice, wheat and maize), but also roots and tubers, grain, legumes, dry-land cereals, livestock and fish, which are of crucial importance in the developing world; 4- Agricultural for improve nutrition and health; 5- Durable solutions for water scarcity and land degradation; 6- Forest and trees; 7 – Climate change, agricultural and food security. Two of them (Rice and Climate Change) have already been approved by the Consortium Board and submitted to the Fund Council for financing. Two others (Maize and Wheat) are in the final process of development. The rest of the CRP portfolio is currently the subject of external reviewers and hopefully will be approved in the next few months.

The second message I would like to convey is that a substantial research initiative has been taken by the CGIAR and has resulted in the establishment of specific research programmes that will contribute to world food security global needs. These programmes were the subject of significant stakeholder consultations (NARS, Universities, regional, sub-regional and international organizations, advance-research institutes, farmers and civil society), and should be the subject of attention, and support by this Committee on World Food Security.

The third subject I would like to address is how can the CFS best interface with these developments and support these achievements.

Firstly, the CFS is the most inclusive platform in world food security issues and as such, should provide a forum for mutual information, discussion and coordination of the major food security initiatives that have been introduced by different speakers in this panel, including coordination about different actors involved in world food security matters. We believe there is ample scope for coordination and cooperation among these initiatives. As an example, the Aquila declaration highlights that investment in agricultural research should be substantially strengthened and specific reference is made in the text to the CGIAR. We have not seen any new funding earmarked for that purpose. In fact, the CGIAR is currently struggling to maintain the financial envelope for research at the levels of previous years. We believe, therefore, that the CFS should promote greater coherence and impact and help to break the "silo mentality" that often guides different initiatives.

Secondly, we see a role for the CFS in helping to better integrate all these global developments into national policies and strategies. Thirdly, the CGIAR is only a small portion of international agricultural research and is oriented to produce international public goods. In order to secure an impact on world

food security, the promotion of partnerships with different stakeholders is an essential prerequisite. Complementary financing to that of the CGIAR in the development and extension areas is crucial to reach farmers and have an impact on the ground. We believe CFS should play an important global advocacy role in this respect.

Fourthly, there is an urgent need to better define the complementary roles of international, regional and national organizations involved in world food security matters in order to build synergies and avoid unnecessary overlaps and duplications.

Finally, if you asked me what is the best contribution that CFS could provide, my answer would be: to raise world food security concerns to a higher political level, and to ensure it is given a higher priority place in the agenda of decision makers. Granted, world food security issues are usually included in the Declarations of the G8 and G20 at the same level of other important issues, or concerns, such as financial crisis and economic recession and the impact of climate change. However, in the search for solutions to these problems, it is worth noting that developed countries were able to secure, in a very short period of time, trillions of dollars to alleviate the financial crisis and to prevent the collapse of the financial system. Similarly, when it comes to climate change, since it is a problem they perceive as having a direct impact on their livelihoods, there is also a much greater willingness to find the resources to meet these concerns. Although world food insecurity certainly kills more people than climate change, it is considered a humanitarian problem and, as such, it does not attract the same degree of attention and priority in the search for urgent solutions or in the allocation of resources. It is high time for world food security to be considered as a political, as well as a humanitarian problem. In the opening statements we heard this morning, it was pointed out that a sixth of the world population goes to bed hungry every night. This is unacceptable, and it is morally and politically imperative to abolish this situation. It is our hope that the CFS will be able to deploy all efforts to correct this situation.