

Statement by Mr. Nicos Kouyialis  
Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment  
Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Cyprus  
to the 38<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference  
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Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like first of all to thank the FAO Secretariat for the documents provided C2013/2 and Add.1, which provide important evidence of the State of Food and Agriculture.

The number of chronically undernourished people around the world remains unacceptably high. The proportion of the world's population suffering from undernourishment is around 12.5 percent or one in eight people. It is clear that progress in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment has slowed considerably since 2007 as a result of economic crisis and higher food prices. Many regions are unlikely to achieve the MDG hunger target without early resumption of progress, requiring inclusive economic recovery as well as food stability.

The persistence of high levels of undernourishment worldwide and recent trends in agricultural prices, production and consumption confirm the major challenges facing world agriculture over the coming decades, notably meeting increasing demand from a growing world population, contributing to eradicating hunger and malnutrition and preserving the natural resources upon which agriculture and we all depend. To meet these challenges we need to improve agricultural productivity, while conserving and enhancing natural resources, allowing farmers to increase global food supplies – as well as their own incomes and food security – on a sustainable basis.

The persistence of undernourishment in many countries, the recognition of micronutrient deficiencies as a form of 'hidden hunger', and the emergence of overweight and obesity as a global concern lend ever greater urgency and complexity to the malnutrition challenge.

For all individuals to be food secure and well-nourished, the food system must provide foods that are available, accessible, safe, diverse and nutritious, and people must make healthy choices. The contribution agriculture makes to nutritional outcomes through production, prices and incomes is fundamental, but the broader food system including post-harvest processing technologies, distribution and marketing can contribute much more. Food systems as a whole, from production through consumption, can be made more nutrition-enhancing and more environmentally sustainable through a number of specific actions.

Analyses and actions to shape food systems for better nutrition must take into account the fact that there is no single food system but rather a multiplicity of systems with characteristics that vary, for example, with incomes, livelihoods and urbanization. Creating a strong nutrition-enhancing food and agricultural system is arguably the most practical, convenient and sustainable way to address malnutrition, as food choices and consumption patterns ultimately become integrated into the lifestyle of the individual.

Nutritious interventions in agriculture generally focus on increasing the abundance, diversity and affordability of food. The most fundamental intervention to enhance the productivity of the agricultural sector is through research and development (R&D) and agricultural policies and services. Efforts to boost agricultural productivity must also consider the impacts on time use—especially of women, who bear a greater responsibility for food preparation and child care. Gender sensitive interventions can improve nutritional outcomes by recognizing women's role in nutrition and as efficient managers of limited household resources by promoting gender equality throughout the system.

Agricultural products reach consumers through food supply chains. Each link in a food supply chain affects the availability, affordability, diversity and nutritional quality of foods. Increasing efficiency, reducing losses and waste, both of food and of the nutrients the food contains, and improving nutritional content through fortification are key interventions that influence availability, affordability and diversity of food and in turn shapes consumer choices, dietary patterns and nutritional outcomes. Other interventions focus on behaviour change through a variety of instruments, including nutrition education, public information campaigns, nutrition labelling, taxation, subsidies and food assistance programmes.

Mr Chairman,

The important role of the agriculture in managing natural resources and the environment for the health of the ecosystem is well established. Most of the focus has been on the production side where the emphasis is on sustainable intensification that can close yield and productive gaps in under-performing systems. This continues to be of great importance. Efforts to improve nutrition through sustainable food systems, then, are a win-win both for society and for agriculture.

Distinguished Delegates,

Cyprus is a member of the FAO since 1960 and, ever since, strongly supports the Organization as the irreplaceable international centre on food security, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development. As you know, we presented our candidature to the FAO Council for the period July 2013 to June 2016. It has passed a decade since the last time Cyprus was a member of the Council. The moment has finally arrived for Cyprus, according to the seat rotation of the European Regional Group and therefore, we would highly appreciate your support during the elections.

Thank you.