

Statement of Mr. Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Government of India.

Mr. Chairperson and distinguished Delegates,

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to address this august gathering to share our experience in agriculture development in India and to comment on the work planned by FAO in the coming two years.

I begin by complimenting Director General FAO and his team for making excellent arrangements for the Conference and for proposing an agenda which focuses on the key issues that impact global food security and sustainable agriculture development. I am confident that we would all benefit from the knowledge exchange and experience sharing for crafting a more involved plan of action for FAO in its endeavour to achieve food and nutritional security for all and thereby improving the socio economic status of our farming community.

Friends, agriculture is a critical sector of Indian economy, generating about 14% of India's GDP and providing employment to nearly 60% of our population. 60% of our cropped area is rainfed with no assured source of irrigation which inhibits the realization of full yield potential. Under the circumstances, it is challenging to meet the rising diversified demands of our growing population for food, feed, fibre and fuel with limited natural resources, mainly land and water, and competing demand for these resources by other sectors. In view of the more frequent climatic variability observed

in recent times, there is greater pressure today in achieving higher agricultural production.

We embarked on a path breaking journey seven years ago to intensify support to our farmers, 85% of whom are having operational holdings less than 2 hectares and are solely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. We initiated a slew of policy and programmatic measures that increased investment in Agriculture, created opportunities for private sector through marketing reforms and launched a focused program on food security in a mission mode approach for increasing production of food grains, fruits and vegetables and the allied sector.

I am pleased to inform you that our efforts over the years have met with resounding success. We are progressing with an overall agricultural growth of 3.5% per annum. We are setting new records in production of food grains year after year. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the food basket of the country has been widened with increasing share coming from relatively under developed regions.

We are maintaining adequate buffer stock to tide over the impact of any natural calamity and to support our public distribution system which targets the vulnerable sections of the society. Not only have we been able to meet the demand of 17% of global population residing in India, but exporting more than 10 million tons of rice, 5 million tons of wheat and 3 million tons of corn to stabilize the global prices of these commodities.

While efforts are being made to bridge the yield gaps to increase agricultural production, it is a matter of concern that there is stagnation in realizing the higher yield potential in different crops. New technological tools especially through genetic engineering need to be employed more aggressively to build tolerance to various abiotic and biotic stresses that inhibit crop yields. Research products made available as a result should be easily accessible and affordable to all. In this regard, we call for strengthening the CGIAR institutions for generating significant technological innovations that could then be easily adapted and upscaled by the National Agriculture Research Systems.

A lot is happening in other spheres of our rural economy as well, through increased investments for developing Human Resources by way of Right to Education, Health and Employment for All, and by creating new institutions that enable the rural population to take advantage of the high economic growth of the country. We are now poised to enact a National Food Security Act which would guarantee access to food grains to the vulnerable sections of society in the country.

Despite several challenges, Indian agriculture has made tremendous strides. We will be happy to share India's success stories with other developing countries. We continue to assure our support to FAO in all its endeavours for promoting South-South Cooperation.

We look upto FAO as a knowledge repository and a natural apolitical ally for addressing global challenges in Agriculture. It is also a very useful platform for sharing of best practices across

different countries for cross learning and mutual benefit in development efforts of each country. In this context, I would like to acknowledge the recent initiatives of the FAO secretariat in devolving more funds for supporting technical cooperation programs and focusing on country specific strategies and partnerships by strengthening the FAO country offices. These are important first steps to make knowledge generated by FAO truly relevant and meaningful to meet the specific needs of individual countries. India welcomes such long overdue initiatives and looks forward to a more fruitful association with FAO in the coming times.

We are committed to strengthening the newly launched Agriculture Market Information System hosted in FAO under the G20 Action Plan on Agriculture. We are now regularly publishing periodical reports in the form of **Agricultural Outlook** of select commodities where situation analysis and forecasts are presented in the short and the medium terms. We are grateful to FAO for supporting this initiative with technical assistance on international exposure and capacity building. We believe that informed decisions based on sound analysis help develop better understanding of food situation internationally and locally.

I would like to conclude by saying that on the basis of our experience in recent years, we are convinced that only a country led agriculture development plan with liberal investments in creating the needed Rural and Agriculture infrastructure supported by strong R&D and an innovative programmatic formulation and implementation approaches for technology transfers to farmers is

the right strategy to sustain agriculture development and ensure food and nutritional security.

We endorse the strategic objectives guiding the development of plan of action of FAO as most of the elements contained in these objectives are in consonance with what we are practicing in India. We hope that the conference would accord its administrative and financial approval to the proposal of the Director General to carry out the plan of action finalized at the end of this conference.

I wish this conference a great success.

Thank you very much.