

**Address to the FAO Conference plenary by Hon.Roderick Galdes,  
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights –  
Malta**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013, afternoon session

Chairman  
Director-General  
Distinguished Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The challenges facing us as nations working together at this Conference remain deeply critical to ensuring peace and prosperity across the world. In a period of time when food markets remain persistently susceptible to volatility, when the level of undernourished people remains high and when the economic situation across the globe remains fragile, our vigilance in ensuring that the fight against hunger proceeds steadily must be higher than ever. There is little doubt however that sustainability is a consideration that must remain at the heart of all our policy responses in facing this challenge together.

My country sees these challenges through the eyes of a small island state that faces the delicate task of maintaining a balance between food production and environmental concerns. Maltese agriculture continues steadily in the transition to a small sector that can be competitive in the globalised market in spite of the economic uncertainties, while increasingly adapting to its role as the main bulwark defending our environment and natural resources. This change is driven by consumers who wish to buy food more affordably, while knowing that their taxmoney is better spent in terms of the public goods they expect from farmers and the food sector and that they are contributing to preserve the rural and social fabric of the communities they live in.

The FAO's own report on the review of the state of food and agriculture states clearly that dramatically improving investment in food productivity lies at the heart of meeting the challenge of eradicating hunger. This will require us all to

continue to place food security high on the global and international agenda, and Malta has been and will continue pursuing this line vigorously at regional level. We feel that sustainability means that we must be sensitive and very aware of the land rights of people in developing countries as this process of investment intensifies. Two years ago in this forum, Kofi Annan made this a clarion call during his delivery of the MacDougall memorial lecture, and those same concerns face us today as climate change places in clear focus the future stresses on water, soil and other productive resources that all countries rely upon.

Malta sees food production as an activity that is profoundly connected to land and society and treads a delicate balance: the balance between preserving local production as part of regional production and trading systems, while allowing for the benefits of global trade to reach consumers. Nowhere is the particular importance of keeping this balance more evident than in than in small island states and I urge the FAO to continue recognising the special susceptibility these face in its future work.

Malta continues to underscore the importance that the role of small farmers and their families in increasing productivity sustainably play in developing appropriate agricultural policies. Their full involvement in all countries is essential in order to enable emerging domestic production sectors to flourish. Similarly strengthening the role of women in production in several countries can play an important role in helping us move together toward the achievement for the millennium development goal relative to this challenge.

Even as we acknowledge the importance of building greater resilience in food production systems and of how to involve the private sector more strongly in partnerships to meet the growing global demand for food, feed and energy, we must recognize that much more needs to be done in terms of sharing of production and market transparency in crucial commodity markets if we are to

stave off repeats of the crises of the past decade. Efforts to find methods of better governance of financial markets which limit spirals of speculation that can drive millions to hunger in short time-spans have not progressed sufficiently under the economic pressures of the past years, placing an even greater burden on governments to ensure that their policies in agriculture and trade reflect the need for transparency and multi-lateralism that inter-dependence imposes upon them.

The FAO must continue in its drive to increase global sustainable agricultural productivity. Malta shares the view that developed and developing countries must co-operate more intensely through various fora in addressing the serious issue of climate change and its effects on food security and agricultural development, particularly through adaptation measures. Efforts must aim to intensify production and reduce land conversion in order to increase crop returns for the farmers who depend on this activity for their livelihoods, as well as to lead to improved economic growth and enhanced food security. Reducing food losses and waste is certainly a key part of the effort to feed the hungry, as are measures to enhance the management and delivery of food to reduce losses. Structural approaches such as improved harvest methods and storage facilities, better access to markets and better balance and fairness for producers in and along the food chain are important.

However I must stress that work on common approaches to reducing the carbon footprint of the food we consume must proceed at a much faster pace than has been the case so far. It will become increasingly unacceptable for taxpayers to subsidize food production systems and trade which delivers food out of season and at prices which undercut local productive communities and which involves disproportionately high emissions of greenhouse gases in the process. Finding the right balance between local, regional and global production and consumption patterns means that we must also empower citizens to consume responsibly, and to be in a position to do so through their buying choices.

In conclusion, Malta urges the FAO to continue in its work of becoming leaner and more efficient in deploying its activities and in its efforts to keep this issue high on the agenda of world leaders. The right to food and nourishment is so basic a need for humanity that we can act in no other way.