



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UN ORGANISATIONS FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR GERDA VERBURG

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE UN ORGANISATIONS
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN ROME**

**38th Session of the FAO CONFERENCE,
ROME, 15 - 22 JUNE 2013**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this FAO Conference. The Netherlands would first like to congratulate Mr Graziano da Silva on the impressive progress the FAO has made under his first 1 ½ years in office. With its renewed strategic framework, the FAO is now able to provide new and ambitious answers, and deliver concrete results and solutions at grassroots level.

Farmers will play a key role in feeding a world of 9 billion people by 2050; key in launching a green revolution, key in increasing production and promoting sustainable change across the entire agricultural system. And they are also key in realising the principles of fairness and environmental care.

Two years ago Kofi Annan spoke at a conference in The Hague on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change. He said: “Most of us here are not farmers. Let us give the lead to those who can really make a difference in agriculture.”

This is a message the Netherlands would like to reiterate to the FAO. People see how farmers are the drivers for green change, how they innovate, how they can shape a better and more secure future for us all. We are able to invest in this change in many ways. We must be the co-pilots of this change, with farmers in the driver’s seat.

The problem of food security is rooted in poverty; it is the result of an uneven distribution of money as well as food. The only remedy to this is sustainable economic growth. People need meaningful jobs and a fair income.

Investment in sustainable agriculture is the stimulus for economic growth that can achieve this. According to the World Bank, every dollar invested in agriculture has two to three times more impact on poverty than a dollar invested in another economic sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In our efforts to achieve sustainable agricultural development, the role of the private sector and private investment needs to be strengthened. Farmers and agribusiness *must* be put in the driver’s seat.

This is exactly what we are doing in the Netherlands. Our agrifood and horticulture sectors are highly innovative and are already working together with the public sector and NGOs to achieve sustainable growth in agricultural productivity. Together we can contribute to sustainably feeding the world.

We have to double productivity while halving inputs, and at the same time cut greenhouse gas emissions by half. I am convinced the agricultural sector, with its technology and innovative power, can deliver the solutions we seek.

The conference in The Hague at which Kofi Annan delivered such an inspiring address, marked the starting point for increasing international support for this approach of climate-smart agriculture. Last September we organised a highly successful conference in Hanoi, Vietnam, that resulted in concrete actions to implement this innovative approach.

We have to build on this success. The next conference will be in South Africa. I would like to congratulate South Africa on this initiative. Our goal is for 75 countries to enter into a partnership for climate-smart agriculture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When we discuss food security, we usually focus on agriculture. However, there is also very clearly a maritime component to food security. Fifteen percent of the world population depend on fish as the primary source of protein.

The oceans are also frequently overlooked in their capacity as a climate regulating factor and as a source of life. Indeed, healthy and productive oceans are vital to mankind.

It is for that reason that the Netherlands has taken the initiative to organise the Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth. This Summit, organised with our partners, the Worldbank and FAO, will be held from 9 to 13 September in The Hague, and includes a high-level segment on 12 September.

This Summit is not about developing new policies or exchanging knowledge. It is about concrete action and initiatives, from all stakeholders involved: governments, civil society and the private sector.

We all know what needs to be done to secure the health of the oceans. Now is the time to act. I urge the collective leadership to take the action that is needed, so people may benefit today and for generations to come. It is time for turning words into action, to reach concrete, sustainable and durable results, because we all know: if we do what we did, we get what we got.

Thank you.