

Enhancing Disaster Risk Management in Agriculture
23rd to 26th June 2014- Oshakati, Namibia

Opening Statement
by Mr. Babagana Ahmandu, FAO Representative

Worldwide, there are 842 million undernourished people, and hungry people account for 14% percent of developing countries' populations¹. Most of the poor and hungry live in rural areas depend on agriculture, fisheries, forests and livestock for their livelihoods. These sectors belong to the most affected by extreme climatic events, making resource-poor farmers/fishers/herders even more vulnerable to disasters and impacts of climate change.

Large shocks and consecutive disasters can cause serious long-term damage to livelihoods and food security, and they can contribute to reversing gains in poverty reduction, agricultural development and in the reduction of hunger. Over the past 12 years, disasters worldwide caused an estimated USD 1.3 trillion damages, 2.7 billion people were affected and 1.1 million were killed². The year 2013 will always be remembered by Namibian farmers as one of the toughest and most challenging periods in 30 years due to the debilitating and devastating drought still threatening the agricultural sector and the country's food security. Cereal production declined sharply by 42% compared to the previous season, resulting in increased import requirements for the 2013/2014 marketing years. Pasture and water availability for livestock worsened significantly, resulting in the highest quantity of sold livestock recorded in the preceding ten years. 28% of rural households were found to be insecure and 28% moderately food insecure, following the impact of the 2013 drought.

Given this scenario, as well as other complex global trends and constraints, agriculture is challenged to transition towards farming systems that are more productive yet preserve the natural resource base and vital ecosystem services, use inputs more efficiently, have less variability and greater stability in their outputs, and are more resilient to risks, shocks and long-term climate variability. More productive and more resilient agriculture requires a major shift towards robust risk reduction measures, including sector specific disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation technologies and practices, and a more efficient use and management of vital resources such as land, water, soil nutrients and genetic resources. Making this shift requires considerable changes in national and local governance, legislation, policies and financial mechanisms.

To reduce current and future exposure and loss and damage caused by natural hazards and disasters it is crucial to have DRR systematically mainstreamed into the agricultural sector. FAO is part of this effort by for example proactively supporting member countries in mainstreaming DRR into sectoral planning. This capacity building workshop on "Enhancing Disaster Risk Management in Agriculture" also falls under this commitment.

¹ The State of Food Insecurity in the World. 2013. FAO.

² UNISDR, 2011.

In FAO disaster risk reduction and management for resilience is actually a corporate priority. It is expressed in FAO's Strategic Framework 2010-2019 through Strategic Objective 5: "*Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*" affecting agriculture, food and nutrition (one objective among its five new strategic objectives). It makes FAO one of the first UN agencies with a dedicated strategic objective on resilience for combating hunger and contributing to sustainable development. The FAO "DRR for resilience" work addresses disaster risk governance (and this workshop is part of this), surveillance & early warning, prevention and impact mitigation, and preparedness & response to shocks due to natural hazards, transboundary plant pests and animal diseases, as well as food chain crisis, conflicts and protracted crises. The FAO resilience agenda focuses on disaster and crisis prone countries and vulnerable communities with livelihoods depending on agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, trees and other natural renewable natural resources.

FAO's **Framework programme on Disaster Risk Reduction for Food Security and Nutrition – Resilient Livelihoods** was developed to provide strategic direction to member countries for DRR measures within and across agriculture-related sectors. In addition, it promotes an inter-disciplinary and programmatic approach to DRR for food and nutrition security, by integrating the agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry and natural resource management sectors, to respond more effectively to the diverse livelihoods of small-scale farmers and to the complex set of factors which contribute to disaster risks.

Our intent is that this workshop on "Enhancing Disaster Risk Management in Agriculture" will help generate greater understanding, interest and action in DRR and nutrition security in Namibia. We hope it will trigger enhanced political commitment to prevent and mitigate disaster risks, increased ownership of the DRR agenda and the collective responsibility of multiple stakeholders in the implementation of cross-sectoral risk management approaches towards a disaster resilient Namibia.