

Farmers' Major Group

Statement on Transportation.

CSD – 18

Thank you Chairman for the opportunity to put forward the views of Farmers.

Absence of effective transportation is the bane of many developing countries which has impacted agricultural and rural development and kept significant proportion of the population in poverty. We still have situations in our part of the world where farmers are reluctant to grow vegetables in their fields as the products cannot reach consumption centres without perishing. Post harvest losses are estimated at 40% of production. Farmers would request Governments to increase and prioritise investments in building strong market links through roads and cold chains and communication means to reach markets in quick time and preserve quality of products. Hence the urgency of attention for this.

In this context I appreciate the passionate presentation made by the panellist on gender and transport constraints. I would like to add one successful effort in Kerala, a coastal State in India, on providing special buses for fisher-women who walked 8-10 kms with 25 kgs loads on their heads to sell fish. The buses improved their carrying capacity, reducing strain, and also improved the volumes they could take to the market for trade. Their financial conditions have improved.

Having emphasized the need for transportation to reach agricultural products to markets, I would like to remind this august body, the need to produce food as far as possible near home, if not at home, to reduce the food-miles every grain has to travel from the farm to the table – to reduce costs, energy and green house gases.

Transport planning in Major urban centres for wholesale markets needs to be done very intelligently, as Markets located in the centre of cities hold up trucks at the periphery which effect perishables, and alternately trucks in the cities hold up other traffic and cause congestion. Developing countries with their markets developing only now should be given the experiences and solutions of the developed world so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

On the point of bio-fuels, the need to diversify land for bio-fuel production should not impact food production. This point needs a cautious approach, as many countries with small land mass and high density of population do not have the luxury that Brazil has with its abundant land supply.

I wanted to stress on this lest in our enthusiasm for bio-fuels, we do not lose land meant for food production

Thank you.