

SPEAKING POINTS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION, DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SDGs, 22-24 MAY 2013.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Agriculture constitutes the backbone of most African economies and is the largest contributor to Gross Domestic Products (GDP). It is also the dominant provider of industrial raw materials with about two-thirds of manufacturing value-added in most African countries being based on agricultural raw materials.

Furthermore, the agricultural sector in Africa supports approximately seventy percentages (70%) of extremely impoverished and undernourished population. This demonstrates the potential for the sector to become a significant source of sustained economic growth and enhanced livelihoods to achieve food security in Africa.

South Africa is of the view that investments in agriculture, including public and private partnerships needs to be fostered further in order to better mitigate the risks of high prices and to reduce vulnerability to shocks, especially in developing countries. There is a need to promote significant expansion of agricultural research and development and increase resilience with particular attention to small holder agriculture.

The role of women in agriculture is imperative since women represent 40% of the global labour force and 43% of the world's agricultural labour force. It is believed that productivity could be raised if women's skills and talents

are fully utilized and that if women farmers were to have the same access as men to fertilizers and other inputs, including land, countries can increase their chances of attaining food security.

South Africa calls on African countries and the international community to ensure that financial support to climate-smart agriculture benefits smallholders, pastoralist and other stakeholders.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Our view is that to ensure food security and nutrition we need the following imperatives:

Develop effective food assistance strategies and improved nutritional safety nets involving both government and non-governmental agencies to ensure better access to food by all.

Develop and test mechanisms to support early childhood development (ECD) centres to offer meals to the children in their care and initiating national early warning system for food and nutrition insecurity.

Developing countries need to align investment in agriculture with local economic development, particularly in rural areas. This includes the provision or subsidisation of inputs and support services for increased food production, as well as more effective food storage and distribution networks, involving both government and private agencies, to eliminate waste and ensure better access to food by all.

Encourage and improve market participation of the emerging agricultural sector through public-private partnerships, including off-take and other agreements, a

government food purchase programme that supports smallholder farmers,

Encourage agro-processing industries to broaden their supply bases to include the emerging agricultural sector.

Increase investment in research and technology to manage food security risk and to respond to the production challenges currently facing humanity particularly in the developing world such as climate change and bio-energy. It would also include the protection of prime agricultural land, and limitations on its alienation for other activities, including mining, game farming, and property development.

Develop food security information management systems would also be required at national level, with periodic scientific reviews of the state of food security and nutrition in the country.

DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION

According to the UNCCD, two-thirds of the African continent is desert or dry-lands. Arable land is vital for Africa, both as a key asset for farmers and, together with vegetation, to help store carbon that would otherwise be emitted into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

In this respect the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that by 2030 Africa is likely to lose two-thirds of its arable land if desertification and the spread of arid and desert-like areas of land is not stopped.

According to UNCCD estimates Africa is losing between 4 and 12% of agricultural GDP due to deteriorating

environmental conditions, contributing to the high levels of chronic hunger and conflict on the continent. This situation is most noticeable in eastern Africa where a combination of poor annual rains are linked to climate change and driving desertification levels.

Severe land degradation is now affecting 168 countries across the world, according to new research released by the UNCCD. This is an increase on the last analysis in the mid-1990s, which estimated 110 states were at risk. In an economic analysis published in April 2013, the UNCCD warns land degradation is now costing US\$490 billion per year and wiping out an area three times the size of Switzerland on an annual basis. Adding to this, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) predicts that the demand for food will increase 60% by 2050. Experts say the world will need an additional 120 million hectares of agricultural land to support the required food production – that is a new farm the size of South Africa.

Desertification and land degradation in Africa continues to have serious impacts on food production, economic growth and social development. To address land degradation Africa, therefore needs the support of the international community to address sustainable land management, halting land degradation and the rehabilitation of degraded land and assistance with community based natural resource management.

In this context, it is important that agreement be reached by all Parties attending the UNCCD COP11 which is taking place later this year in Namibia and where the UNCCD hopes to 'Zero Net Land Degradation by 2030' resolution. We call on the OWG-SDGs to take these targets into account as constituting an important dimension of poverty eradication efforts.

Land is central to the nexus that links energy, food, water and environmental health in an interdependent loop. In this regard, more holistic that takes into account all elements of the nexus and the feedback loops between the issues, is crucial.

In this regard, the international community should support the initiative of having a targeted zero net land degradation within the context of sustainable development goals. To address this challenge of land degradation Africa needs support through sustainable land management, halting land degradation and rehabilitation of degraded land; and assistance with community based natural resource management;

End.