

16th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Business & Industry delegation introduction for multi-stakeholder session

Tuesday, 6 May 2008

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Thank you Mr. Chair,

My name is Kristen Sukalac, from the International Fertilizer Industry Association, a global organization representing some 475 companies and organizations based in 84 countries. It is a pleasure for me to summarize some of the issues raised by the business community –including members of the International Agri-Food Network, the International Chamber of Commerce the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and other business groupings – in our background paper.

Growing global demand for agricultural output continues to increase the imperative to raise agricultural productivity. At the same time, pressure on natural resources is increasing dramatically. To ensure environmental health and avoid further encroachment onto wildlife habitats, agriculture must balance multiplying demands and further increase the productivity of existing farmland by reducing losses and increasing yields through innovative agricultural techniques and good management practices.

One of the first indicators of sustainable agriculture must be its ability to provide sufficient quantities of high-quality produce. In order to achieve this goal in a way that is environmentally responsible and socially sensitive, all stages of the agri-food chain must be as efficient as possible, using inputs optimally and minimizing waste.

In the context of the current food crisis, we would like to highlight some issues that deserve urgent attention:

- Pre- and post-harvest losses reduce agricultural output by about half. Losses in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are considerably higher than in industrialized countries and in some exceptional seasons even reach 100%. Many technologies and management practices already exist that could greatly alleviate this situation, if deployed in an integrated site-specific manner.
- The productivity gap requires a coordinated effort. It is gratifying today to speak alongside the scientific and technological community and the farmers. We are natural partners in harnessing human ingenuity to develop and spread innovations that can help us further improve agricultural sustainability. Governments also have their role to play, through infrastructure development, R&D and appropriate regulatory frameworks, among others.

While we need to act in the short term to address the current crisis, we should not overlook the importance of addressing systemic changes in the longer-term. The case studies provided in our background paper include a sampling of initiatives that contribute to sustainable agriculture:

- Inhibitors that reduce GHG emissions in pasturelands
- Targeted crop nutrient management that helps reduce human micronutrient deficiencies
- Credit insurance schemes that allow village retailers to supply agricultural inputs, thus reduces farmers' costs and risks
- Tying urban markets to rural dairy producers through a fleet of bicycle delivery people
- Information kiosks and mobile phone facilities that allow farmers to access a wide range of farming best management practices, market prices, weather reports
- Drought insurance programmes to reduce farmer risk
- Buying carbon credits from farmers who plant indigenous trees and invest in solar and biomass energy projects
- Using supply chains to support the livelihoods of smallholders and local communities
- Crop varieties adapted to the difficult conditions that are expected to become more common in future: extreme weather conditions, drought, flooding and others

In a world where land, water, other natural resources and labour are all limited, innovative agricultural technologies and good management practice are vital in order to increase the productivity of existing farmland in a sustainable manner. A globally sustainable solution will comprise a mosaic of site-specific solutions that does not exclude a priori any option. This is especially important since we are working towards a moving target.

We look forward to identifying new ideas and common ground for working together to enhance agricultural sustainability. In this context, I would like to conclude by inviting you all to join us at the side event “ Enhancing agricultural productivity: Meeting the Sustainability Challenge” , which is being jointly organized by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, the International Council for Science, CropLife International and IFA tomorrow evening at 6:15pm in Conference Room 6. Flyers are available here.