



*Ministero delle politiche agricole
alimentari e forestali*

Press release

G8 AGRICULTURE: A NEW ROAD FOR AGRICULTURE

“ With this first G8 Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting we have respected the mandate of the Toyako Summit and opened a new road, with common strategies to fight hunger and to safeguard, as well as promote, food security. I hope that these three days have made you fall in love with agriculture”.

With these words the Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, Luca Zaia, spoke to journalists, 452 of them, closing the first G8 Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting, the results of which will be presented, in June, at the G8 summit to be held in La Maddalena.

The meeting closed with the commitment, as written in the final declaration of the Ministers’ “to use all the tools available to alleviate the negative consequences of the current financial crisis on poverty and hunger, strengthen and encourage sustainable agriculture and food production, increase the investments in agriculture and research.”

Fighting speculation and protecting production identities, while working in a free market, and centrality of the agricultural production in the global political agenda. These are the important objectives achieved thanks to the great action carried out in the three days by the Italian Presidency.

Among the commitments contained in the Declaration called “Agriculture and food security at the core of the international agenda”, there are two main points that minister Zaia has pointed out as the two results that Italy brought home : “avoid unfair competition, agricultural trade distortions, including – it is written in the declaration- export restrictive measures as agreed by G20 – and remove the obstacles to a sustainable use of the agricultural factors of production”.

Aims sustained also by the People’s Republic of China, that, in the press conference highlighted that a common strategy was agreed upon, on how to face the economic and food crisis. The Chinese Minister Niu Dun explained that it is necessary to initiate common rules that “do not hinder trade,

but it is important to maintain a tariff system, the only way to allow development in the Developing Countries”. China also highlighted that it is necessary to “cut unfair tariffs to allow the creation of a sustainable trade of agricultural products”.

Minister Zaia, answering journalists, underlined the position of his Chinese counterpart. This, together with the satisfaction expressed by the International Organisations for the inclusion of their ambitions in the Final Declaration, are signs that this meeting is a watershed in the history of world agriculture.

The Ministers took into account, it is read in the declaration, of what was underlined by the International Organisation attending the meeting, that is the “urgent need to help developing countries and countries in transition to expand agriculture and food production and to increase investments in agriculture, agribusiness and rural development”. The Ministers will present the world leaders, who will meet in Sardinia, also other important messages like “We also commit ourselves to increasingly share technology, processes and ideas with other countries in the interest of increasing the capacity of national and regional institutions and governments, as well as promoting food security”. Furthermore “There should be monitoring and further analysis of factors potentially affecting price volatility in commodity markets, including speculation. An international coordinated strategy needs to be encouraged in order to improve the efficiency of agri-food chains. We support efforts against wastage along the food chain in developing countries, particularly for post-harvest losses, in order to avoid food loss reducing the quantities of commodities required by food chains and to improve hygiene, health and nutrition. We also support efforts to reduce wastage, in developed countries. We need to sustain the benefits of globalization and open markets, highlighting the crucial importance of rejecting protectionism and encouraging the development of local, regional and international integrated agricultural markets. We underline the importance of a rules-based international trading system for agricultural trade and we are committed to reaching a balanced, comprehensive and ambitious conclusion of the Doha Round. “

Speaking about this the Minister Zaia declared that “we will continue to work in order to redefine common and equal rules for international trade, that can be applied in a free market, at the same time, ensuring that no farmer is starved and enabling a healthy and long lasting development in developing countries”.

In the Declaration it is furthermore stated that the Ministers wish to “to support the role of well functioning markets as a means for improving food security and they will continue to explore various options on a coordinated approach to stock management.”

At the point eight of the declaration Minister Zaia highlighted one of the main results obtained by Italy “Food security also requires targeted policies to guarantee effective management and sustainable utilization of natural resources involving local communities in accordance with their identities. This pattern of growth also meets the requirements of less developed rural areas where local sustainable production should be improved.”

“In each cultivated seed, Zaia commented, there is the history of a population and its traditions. The meeting recognized this basic principle of our agricultural policy and will ask that this be recognized by the Heads of State, creating the bases for a new world agriculture, able to use the past knowledge as roots for a new future of growth and opportunity”.

Growth and development is obviously tied to a rise in agricultural production, that must be balanced with the production of renewable energy from biomasses, “so as to, provide a response to our energy, economic, environmental and agriculture needs and does not compromise food security”. According to the approach outlined by the Declaration of the High Level Conference on World Food Security of June 2008, the Ministers have underlined their “our active support for the consultative design process and early establishing of the Global Partnership further to the guidelines provided by the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Leaders Statement. This Partnership will bring a coherent approach by engaging all stakeholders and by strengthening existing structures and institutions. It should have a global political dimension aiming at an improved coordination and greater coherence for international strategies and policies that have an impact on the world food security. As part of this Partnership, a global network of high level experts on food and agriculture would provide science-based analysis and highlight needs and future risks.”

Therefore there is a common vision of the aims that must be reached, and a “common vision on the world that we want to leave for our children” Zaia, specified, “it is an enormous big step”. We finally put on paper the world that we want: a world in which 140 million children and one billion people do not die of hunger each year; a world in which access to healthy food, as well as sufficient and nutrient food, in a ‘normal’ occurrence. I am very satisfied – the Minister added- of the fact that the worlds’ eyes have been for three days focused on a sector that is vital for our future. A sector that is too often ignored and not considered a noble and important activity. United we wanted to put once again this topic at the center of the media’s attention and we will work so it continues to be so in the future”.