



MINISTERO DELLE POLITICHE AGRICOLE  
ALIMENTARI E FORESTALI



## PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

Cison di Valmarino, 20 April 2009

The Agriculture G8 Ministers' meeting under the Italian presidency was held in Cison di Valmarino from 18 to 20 April 2009. On Saturday 18 the meeting started in G8 format and the Ministers were engaged in a debate on the mandate emerged from Hokkaido Toyako G8 summit of 7-9 July 2008: food security and price volatility. The delegations discussed on means and strategies to increase production and productivity, on the role of markets, the relation between agriculture and environment and the role of the international organization for the market stability.

The delegations underlined the need to place agriculture and food security at the core of political agenda.

The G8 partners reached a consensus on a final declaration in which they commit 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, avoid unfair competition, agricultural trade distortions, including export restrictive measure, as agreed by G20. They also recommended a monitoring and analysis of factors potentially affecting commodity market, including speculation.

The G8 partners also renewed the central role played by agriculture that can have significant impacts on other policies, particularly health policies through the fight against hunger and malnutrition and environmental policies, including the sustainable management of natural resources and reiterated their determination to defeat hunger and to ensure access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food for present and future generations. It was also stressed the role of agricultural households and smallholder farms and their access to land in many parts of the world and the need of policies encouraging women participation in the rural development together with other policies that should remain at the center of gender equality and young farmers.

Ministers discussed the implications of climate change for agriculture and food security, underlining the need for shared strategies, including adaptation and mitigation.

The G8 partners underlined the 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.

In the late afternoon of Saturday 18 the debate was held in a large format with the active participation of the Ministers of the G8 and Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa , Australia, Argentina and Egypt on the current topic of agriculture, food security and economic recession.

We started a inclusive process, involving all countries: Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa , Australia, Argentina and Egypt, leading to reach common points of convergence on agriculture and food security. This process has started here in Cison di Valmarino.

During the meeting the following main contributions emerged from the outreach partners:

1. **Agriculture in government agendas** – Countries should pay closer attention to food security, prioritize agricultural development in national agendas, and create an enabling environment to tackle the financial crisis and contribute to economic recovery.
2. **Development assistance** – adequate financial resources should be dedicated to development. The developed countries should fulfill commitments made and achieve ODA targets. Some delegations underlined

the necessity not to ignore African agriculture and support the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and to promote South-south cooperation by bilateral and multilateral channels.

3. **Conclusion of Doha Round** – some delegations underlined the necessity to build a more equitable multilateral trade system and called for the elimination of all trade distorting subsidies and for the opening of agricultural markets of the developed countries as a crucial part of the response to the food crisis. It was also stressed that equitable trade will help provide the resources needed to achieve stability and prosperity for rural communities and fighting hunger in developing countries. Some other delegations underlined the importance of an early, balanced and ambitious conclusion of the Doha Round to achieve these objectives.
4. **Family farming** – great importance was placed by several delegations of the outreach countries on the key role in sustainable agriculture played by family farming and rural economies. The necessity to provide smallholder farming access to land, credit, technical assistance, education and crop insurance, as well as allowing family farmers to have access to local and international markets was underlined.
5. **Access to food** – all the delegations of the outreach countries remarked the necessity to take urgent action to ensure adequate access to food, and to work in the creation and strengthening of safety nets instrumental in preventing food crisis.
6. **Sustainable development and biofuels** – some delegations stressed the importance of biofuels as a unique opportunity to generate more jobs and income and alleviating poverty in rural areas. Some other delegations stressed that this cannot be achieved at the cost of the global food security.
7. **Dialogue and political will** – partners observed that the global community has been engaged in constructive dialogue since the starting point of the crisis. Most of the delegations called for enhanced international cooperation in agriculture and food security. To achieve this aim dialogue should be fostered among governments, international organizations and other stakeholders. They also emphasized the importance of the need to keep agriculture and food security on the top of international political agenda. Some countries supported the call for convening a World Food Summit in November 2009 in Rome.

8. **Climate Change** –implications of climate change on agriculture, including mitigation and adaptation, were discussed. Issues related to the role of water management in agriculture were particularly emphasized. Partners raised the importance of climate change for agricultural production and food security. Decisions taken at Copenhagen in November 2009 should reflect these concerns by taking into account the challenges and opportunity for agriculture while agreeing on adaptation and mitigation measures.
9. **A right to food** – several delegations emphasized the need to work further for the achievement of the right to food.
10. **Global governance** – delegations supported the proposal for a Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition within the UN system. In this context they also supported the ongoing consultations for strengthening the Committee on Food Security.
11. **Technology** – the delegation insisted on the necessity to encourage further investment on new technologies and conservation practices. Investments in infrastructure and initiative aimed in ameliorating the food chain in order to avoid losses and waste from field to the markets were also emphasized.
12. **Food security, political and social stability** – in their statements several Ministers and heads of delegations underlined the role of food security in maintaining political and social stability in many areas of the world.

On Sunday 19 and Monday 20 the debate included also the heads of relevant international bodies dealing with food security: FAO, IFAD, WFP, World Bank, OECD, African Union and High Level Task Force on Food Security.

The debate was reach of the latest information provided by the international organization on the impact of the world economic recession in the less developed rural area of the world.

It was confirmed that emergency assistance will remain an important means to grant immediate help to people strongly affected by extreme poverty and hunger condition. A critical aspect of food security is individual access to adequate and affordable nutritious food. Delegations expressed deep concern that hunger and malnutrition is on the increase across the developing world and underlined the need to take all possible actions in coordinate manner to put in place measures to ensure individual food security, in line with twin track approach taken by the UN Secretary-

General' High Level Task Force. At the same time was also mentioned the need to expand rural infrastructure including capacity for food safety, plant and animal health and broaden market access.

It was underlined the impact of economic downturn on agro-food sector, the drop of demand and prices, the impact of reduce access to credit for farmer due the lack the liquidity within the banking system.

The overall debate showed the general consciousness of the need to place agriculture and food security at the core of international agenda.

The statement of Italian presidency of agriculture ministers' meeting will be forwarded to the attention of the G8 ministerial meeting of development to be held in Pescara from 21 to 23 may 2009 and to the G8 summit to be held in La Maddalena from 8 to 10 july 2009.