

# **International Federation of Agricultural Producers**

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**CSD 16**

**May 14 , 2008, New York**

## **Roundtable 1: Investing in Africa to Achieve Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development**

### **STATEMENT**

Intervention from the Farmers' Group by

Mr. Jack Wilkinson, Canada

Obviously when we talk about investment in Africa, from our point of view, we're talking about investment in agriculture. Agriculture has been mentioned often when referring to the potential for growth in Africa. We think there are some positive signs but much more can be done. We know that in many countries, there is a commitment to 10% for agriculture in budgets in the NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for African Development). Some countries have achieved this goal; however, many others are still lagging behind and have a long ways to go.

The World Bank agriculture lending has finally started to increase from a low of 1.5 billion to last year to about 8.9 billion. But the Official Development Aid (ODA) which is being referred to is still extremely low . Much still needs to be done in this regard.

The current food crisis is simply a wake-up call from what we can expect in the globe for centuries and decades to come. We are situation where neglect in agriculture from both the policy and investment sides has been critical. Extension services have collapsed in many countries. There is very minimal support to agriculture and therefore, for the last number of years, we have not seen any growth of substance in Africa when it comes to agriculture.

I would like to challenge countries not to think of these high food prices as a crisis, but rather, consider it as an opportunity for your farmers. For once, it makes sense to invest in grains and oilseeds in every country and in particular, in Africa.

The previous speaker mentioned that there are 25 billion dollars worth of import goods coming into Africa. It is important to start thinking of agriculture as an investment opportunity and as a tax base and a profitable sector, instead of seeing it the other way round. Think that if every country in Africa that had the potential to maximize its food production was exporting food around the world today – not only to the European Union, but to every country, wouldn't it be a positive change of situation? For once, this could be a historic time where you can actually invest in agriculture and anticipate a profitable return in investment. I would like to challenge countries here : Which one of your Prime Ministers, Presidents, and Cabinet have invited your farm leaders to reflect upon the following? – “Do we have an appropriate agricultural strategy to maximize our food production this year?” Stand in the shoes of a farmer, instead of the shoes of a bureaucrat and ask yourselves a very simple question: What do you need to do to support your farm community so it can maximize their potential to grow food for your country? I think you will be able to think of many different solutions and many different opportunities in which you can support agriculture. It is critical now to move to action. We will have 50 % more food requirements by 2030 with the same resource base (e.g land, water) and a growing population . We have the technology, we have the land, we have the farmers. Are you using them to the maximum? Thank you.