

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

Opening Plenary Session on “WATER FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT”

THE THIRD WORLD WATER FORUM

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Presentation by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)

By Mr. Esa Härmälä, Vice-President, Presented by Ms. Mercy Karanja (Kenya)

Mr Chairman,

It is a great pleasure for me to present the Farmers' views at this Opening Plenary on Water for Food and Environment. As the Vice-President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and as a forest owner, I would like to compliment the International Water Management Institute for the important role it is playing in coordinating this dialogue on Water for Food and Environment to make it a success.

As a member of this consortium, IFAP is very proud to be part of this dialogue. Indeed, it is very important for us, Farmers, who use an important part of the water resources to sustain our activity, to find a common ground with other stakeholders for a sound management of a scarce resource such as water.

The technical paper entitled “Putting the water requirements of freshwater ecosystems into the global picture of water resources assessment” is very well written and well-argued.

Even though a bit theoretical for us Farmers who are fond of down to earth issues, this paper raises a few important ideas that deserve further analysis. The idea that the sound management of water resources goes along with the protection of different natural resources, is essential.

In fact, a global approach of the management of the water basins is needed, taking into account, environmental and socio-economic factors. In other words,

a sound water management policy requires a broad rural natural resource approach.

The issue of developing a participative approach, giving a say to different water users in decision making processes when it comes to the management of river basins has to be given priority.

The Production of data information on ecosystems and water availability and quality is lacking in a number of countries in the world. In the same line, the idea to incorporate freshwater biodiversity related information in water resources planning and management could be explored.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me describe the challenges of agriculture and water use.

The freshwater needs of agriculture continue to grow following the increased demand of food. The FAO predicts that it will be necessary to double world food production over the next 25 years using essentially the same land area.

Currently, about 70% of the world's freshwater supplies are used for agriculture. It is clear that in the future, sustainable agriculture will be called upon to increase the efficiency of water use – that is, “more crop per drop”.

Consequently, sustainable agriculture must be made even more intensive and productive than it is now, despite the substantial productivity gains achieved over the last 30 years .

Increasing the land area under irrigation is one key element in making the land more productive. However, water constraints may well make expanding irrigation to feed an additional 1.5 billion people by 2025 very problematic.

Therefore, future productivity gains must be achieved through sustainable intensification and more efficient use of such limited resource as water. Research and investment funding is needed in order to adopt farming methods that minimise the need of water.

IFAP believes that sustainable agriculture should be given a high priority on access to water supplies. Only drinking water and sustainable sanitation could be at an equivalent position.

Access to water is a key issue in poverty eradication.

Issues concerning common access to, and management of freshwater supplies have a central role in sustainable development and eradicating poverty. They have now been given priority in international policy as a result of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September, 2002.

In poor countries, most of the population lives in rural areas and is engaged in agriculture, livestock raising, fishing or forestry. The struggle against poverty must therefore be addressed through agriculture and rural development, and a key element in winning this struggle is access to water resources.

Quality of water is important for food safety.

More over, scarcity of water can only be addressed by taking a cross-sectoral perspective, looking at basket of factors such as socio-economic, technical and institutional aspects of water use.

It is important to protect the quality of water because it represents a prerequisite for sustainable development. This responsibility cannot only be put on farmers. It has to be shared by all stakeholders.

In order to provide Farmers with equitable access to water resources and to allow them plan their operations correctly, it is crucial to establish a secure water supply (rights), a fair price of water supply for farmers' sustainable needs and food security. For this matter, it is important to establish transparent legal frameworks.

Equitable access to water is a gender issue. Rural women play an important role in the economic survival of their families.

Farmers' and other local stakeholders' interests must be fulfilled.

National and local authorities need to have a promoting role in terms of water supply. In other words, they do not necessarily have to be providers but they have to make sure that water is distributed in an equitable manner and at a reasonable price.

It is also important that all stakeholders' interests are fulfilled. For this reason, partnerships among farmers and other water users could prove to be a useful approach to water management.

Developing strategies for sustainable and equitable management of water resources addresses, above all, how the available water should be used to

provide food, safe environments, health, and livelihoods to a growing world population, in harmony with nature.

All countries do not face the same kind of problems with respect to water resources. Appropriate water and food strategies must therefore be country, region and location-specific.

The tools used for achieving efficient water use and the protection of the resource are no longer simple engineering methods. The application of legislation, economic incentives, natural resource management, and new organizational approaches, reinforced with the skills of communication, are increasingly important. Integrated approach for managing this valuable resource has become critical.

Promotion of international river basin cooperation is crucial.

River basins stretching to the area of several countries cover 45% of the land surface of the Earth. They account for approximately 80% of the global river flow. As water quality degrades and water quantity diminishes over time, tensions spill across boundaries and the overall effect on the stability of a region can be unsettling.

Therefore, water management systems must meet the capacity and the needs of each river basin and catchment area to obtain good water quality and quantity. There should be a link between sustainable water and farming policies. This should not prevent the transfer of water from areas where it is in excess to those where there are water shortages

Consultation and participation must be developed.

In order to be equitable and sustainable, water management and development has to be conducted on a participatory basis, with decision making occurring at the lowest appropriate level. All water users and stakeholders especially farmers, men and women, young and old, both in developed and developing countries, should have a say in water management.

Participation in decision making should not be limited to a consultative role of farmers and other stakeholders. When Farmers' Organisations do not participate in the decision-making process, the reason is either because they were not trusted enough or because they did not have enough capacity to get involved actively. Therefore, farmers need to get organised and build up their capacity to participate in decision-making processes.

National governments have the responsibility to set up national programs to strengthen technical, financial and education capacities of these local associations to enable them to participate and create their own water management associations for maintenance and running of water sources.

For a more efficient and rational use of the water resources

The United Nations background paper on water, written for the Johannesburg Summit set indicative targets of improving water use efficiency in the agricultural sector by 5 percent by 2010 and by 10 per cent by 2015. In order to reach these targets, the following will have to be achieved:

IFAP is in favour of water management strategies that put emphasis on stewardship programs to promote a more sustainable use of freshwater resources in combination with new agriculture methods.

These strategies would include incentives for the adoption of new, more environmentally-friendly techniques, as they become available. Rewarding those farmers and communities that work for the conservation, quality and efficient use of water without putting prejudice on their income is a good incentive.

IFAP supports the use of appropriate technologies adapted to local conditions and made accessible to producers.

It is important to outline that irrigation accounts for around 70 percent of water demand worldwide, and over 90 per cent in low-income developing countries. Extension and reinvestments of irrigation systems must be done in a way that guarantees distribution without loss of water due to evaporation or inefficient joints.

Research has an important role to play in improving drainage and irrigation systems. For example, it is necessary to develop - perhaps through biotechnology - the drought tolerance characteristics of plants as well as measures to promote soil moisture conservation measures. Research and development on this matter should be run by public authorities and not left in the hands of multinationals.

Farmers need economic security in case of natural disasters

Developing risk management tools for farmers hit by natural disasters are of high importance to guarantee them a decent income. There is an urgent need to

acknowledge compensation for the most vulnerable farmers who don't yet benefit from adequate risk management tools.

Governance and policy for all.

Increasing the combined value of all water uses calls for more attention to water quality, rather than just quantity, issues. All kinds of waste disposal therefore becomes critical to sharing water among different uses. In short, the managerial approach should be multi-sectorial.

Even if agriculture fully complies with the “more crop per drop” paradigm, there is a danger that other water users do not follow the same example. In other words, there is a risk that they take advantage of water savings achieved by agriculture in this case.

Investment funding should more than double

Estimates of the size of the required global investment in all forms of water related infrastructure vary up to \$180 billion annually. This compares with current investment levels of \$70-80 billion. All sources of funding should be mobilised in order to bridge the huge gap between current and required levels of expenditure.

Increased development assistance as a complement to domestic sources of funding. Farmers call for achieving the target of 0.7 percent of GDP for ODA.

IFAP calls for additional financing for sustainable water infrastructure from international financial institutions like the World Bank (IFIs).