

PRESS RELEASE 119/2011

FAO AND AUC ADOPTING LONG TERM APPROACHES TO FOOD SECURITY



Addis Ababa: 27 September 2011- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the African Union Commission will work together to strengthen sustainable food security and long term planning to minimize avoidable famine and food shortages.

In a meeting held at the AU on 26 September, the two institutions reviewed the statistics in agriculture and food production, and shared

concerns on food price volatility globally, with a view to engage in coordinated long term interventions and advocacy for support for such interventions. Critical figures that were revealed include: an average 20 percent of world cultivable land is under irrigation, Asia stands at 39% and in East Africa this figure stands at 1.5%: after falling in 2009 and 2010, world cereal production is likely to increase by 3% but this will barely be enough to keep up with demand: food prices are now higher than their previous peak in 2008: food stocks are low, which tends to worsen price volatility. Already marginalized and poor communities are likely to be the worst affected.

The meeting heard that it costs 10 times more to provide food aid than to produce it. In this respect it concluded that large amounts of aid is needed to support planting, livestock and building of water points, to encourage and stimulate sustainable production of food. "Droughts should not necessarily lead to famine", the meeting agreed, adding that building resilience is one objective of the long term approach.

In this respect, the African Union said it has commenced on the Comprehensive Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), as a tool to ensure food security. The FAO was involved in the design of the programme. Further, the meeting called for more support at national level, to ensure proper implementation of the CAADP programme. 29 countries have so far signed the CAADP compacts and incorporated the compact into their agricultural agenda.

The FAO and the AU also discussed their comparative strengths in the effort to ensure that Africa has enough food. The AU was seen to be able to advocate for funding for longer term interventions- a view that the meeting agreed is now more acceptable to donors than before. The FAO can bring in technical assistance and data analysis. Highlighting the synergies, the AU Commission Deputy Chairperson, Mr. Erastus

Mwencha said this information on global trends would be useful to the AU in its advocacy efforts, adding that there is also need to follow upon international pledges of aid as well monitoring how much of the aid is dedicated to agriculture.

The meeting was held between the Deputy Director General of the FAO Mr. Manoj Juneja and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Mr Erastus Mwencha and their respective delegations in the office of the AUC Deputy Chairperson.

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