

High-level Segment of ECOSOC 2007

Roundtable: “Ending the cycle of food crises: a home-grown green revolution in Africa”

4 July 2007

Talking points for Mr Harcharik, Deputy Director-General, FAO:

A. Why do we need a green revolution in Africa or why so much focus on Africa?

- Africa is the only region in the world where agricultural productivity is declining. Yields of maize and other staple cereals typically remain around 1.0 ton per hectare.
- Over the past 15 years, the number of undernourished on the continent has actually *increased* by 45 million to 220 million people suffering from extreme hunger today.
- Increasing agricultural productivity – particularly among Africa’s smallholders - can become the engine for Africa's economic growth.
- But productivity alone won’t do it; it must be accompanied by supportive policies which are lagging behind. Policies to support agriculture and rural development are needed; national capacities to deal with natural and man-made disasters need to be strengthened; HIV/AIDS pandemic and other prevalent diseases that lower people’s productive capacity must be controlled; and gender inequalities must be addressed.

B. Is a green revolution possible in Africa?

The answer if “yes” but not with business as usual!

- Both positive and negative lessons of green revolution in Asia are largely relevant to the African situation. However, few things need to be done differently. In Africa, efforts must focus on the needs of the hungry and poor, especially the rural poor; their needs, views, and experiences should form the basis for any developmental strategy so that hunger and poverty are alleviated without causing huge economic divisions and deterioration of natural resources. Technological innovations for the green revolution in Africa must focus on the smallholder farmer, ‘seed-livestock-agro-forestry’ systems, and be natural resource friendly.
- Stable and democratic governments and policies that take into account globalization, the poor and the women; provide for improved delivery systems for seeds, fertilizers, crop protection chemicals and veterinary supplies; and credit and markets are essential. Fertilizer use in sub-Saharan Africa is 10 kg per hectare compared to over 500 kg per hectare in the developed world due mainly to higher fertilizer costs. Only 3.7% of the total arable land in Africa is currently irrigated, against 33% in Asia and the Pacific, and 29% in the Middle East and North Africa. This is important as the green revolution of Asia was

generally seed-fertilizer-irrigation based. Many of the constraints and opportunities facing African agriculture cut across national boundaries, creating scope for regional initiatives and efforts

- Infrastructure (roads, markets, irriga