

Speech of Minister Gerda Verburg of the Netherlands Ministry  
of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, on the occasion of the  
FAO World Summit on Food Security on 17 November 2009

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Your Excellencies, Colleagues, distinguished delegates, Ladies and  
Gentlemen,

The years 2008 and 2009 have shown very clearly the  
interdependent character of the world economy.  
Almost no country or economic sector has been exempted from the  
sometimes disastrous effects of the worldwide financial and economic  
crisis.  
This goes especially for the countries and people who were still  
reeling from the onslaught of the food and energy crisis.  
Bail-outs of huge companies; subprime mortgages, and the debate  
about bonuses for managers of financial institutions have taken over  
the front pages of the newspapers.  
However, we must not forget that the food crisis is still there.  
It poses a threat not only to the wellbeing of nearly a billion people  
but also to national and international security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are facing one of the biggest challenges ever: how to feed 9  
billion people in 2050.  
This was also the main challenge of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the United  
Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which I chaired.  
There was recognition of the fact that the achievement of the first  
Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people living  
in poverty seems further away than ever.  
At the same time, numerous reports indicate that we use far more of  
our natural resources than our planet can regenerate.  
Some reports even suggest as much as four times!

The competition for the use of natural resources – land, water and  
biodiversity – for the production of food, feed and bio-fuels is fiercer  
than ever.  
Against this backdrop delegates from all over the world agreed in  
New York in May 2009 that a world facing multiple crises, including  
climate change and looming natural resource scarcity, urgently needs  
a transition towards a more sustainable and resource efficient  
agriculture.

I am convinced that people realize that old solutions no longer fit the  
new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

“If you do what you did, you get what you got”.

The most important result of this year’s CSD-session was a paradigm  
shift for agriculture.

Agriculture is now at the heart of sustainable development. Agriculture is no longer seen as a problem in achieving sustainable development. Agriculture is now considered an important part of the solution. Agriculture is at the heart of poverty reduction. In many developing countries, agriculture is the driving force for economic development. Agriculture is at the heart of the climate change agenda, especially when we look at mitigation and adaptation measures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This paradigm shift underlines the need for a sustainable and home grown Green Revolution, especially in Africa.

Such a second Green Revolution should be a revolution in the most literal meaning of the word.

This means calling for a revolution in ideas, a revolution in technologies and a revolution in agricultural and trade policies and market access as well as providing the financial means.

It calls for new, creative and innovative thinking.

It involves not only Governments, but all parts of society.

Such a sustainable second Green Revolution can happen through a five track approach:

- increasing our investments in sustainable agriculture;
- creating an enabling environment;
- developing sustainable production and food chains;
- improving market access especially for developing countries, and
- Social safety net and access to finance, through for example, microcredit.

From these five areas of action one can see the importance of concerted action by governments and other partners in society, especially agribusiness.

Entrepreneurship in the broad agricultural sector is key to sustainable growth.

For stability and wealth in a country large scale and small scale development of the agricultural sector is needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Part of the paradigm shift is also the full use of the latest scientific knowledge and experience and the opportunities provided by science, research and technology.

They must be connected to education and agricultural extension services in order to disseminate the results of research and to make it applicable on the ground.

Extension services need to be revitalized in many countries and made more representative.

In that area we must realize that women are the most important contributors to agricultural production in Africa. They produce 60% of the food, but own only 2% of the land and only receive 5% of the agricultural assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I already mentioned the relationship between sustainable agriculture and climate change.

I always think that the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Next month Copenhagen should be the place to prove that agriculture is at the heart of the climate change agenda.

Globally, the agricultural sector has a significant potential to contribute to mitigation of climate change as well as to provide adaptation and sustainable development opportunities. At the same time, it can improve the lives and incomes of farmers and perhaps deliver diversified livelihoods.

Some reports suggest that the agricultural sector could be broadly carbon neutral by 2030 if sustainable management practices were widely adopted.

Globally, the **mitigation** potential could be realised at low cost.

The challenge here is how to unlock the potential while maintaining a sustained food production capacity.

Mitigation actions to increase soil carbon, for example, can increase resilience against climate-induced stresses and increase productivity in a sustainable way.

Mitigation is one thing, but we must not lose sight of the serious challenges for agricultural production resulting from higher temperatures and drier or wetter climates.

Therefore, investments in **adaptation are** key, including, for example, in more drought and heat-tolerant crops.

If we want a second Green Revolution, we need to modernize agriculture by combining the best farmer knowledge with the best agricultural science, as well as by promoting good land and water stewardship.

While we need to **adapt** agricultural practices to climate change, there are win-win opportunities for both adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.

It is not just what happens down on the farm that echoes to the climate theme.

There is a great deal that can be achieved in terms of the distribution, post harvest and consumption of the food we eat.

Food waste, from the farm and the seas to the supermarket and the kitchen, is an area that has been under-examined in this regard.

So, let us push for including agriculture and soil carbon in a new climate change deal in Copenhagen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, to meet our challenges we need a strong and adaptive Food and Agriculture Organization in the UN. I welcome the FAO reform and the increased Rome based agencies.

But, there is still a long way to go.

Nevertheless, I will aim for the continuation of the multi donor partnership between the FAO and the Netherlands government. I encourage other Member States to join us.

CSD 17 and this Summit should be meetings where we intensify our investments in agriculture, not only with words but rather with actions and financial means.

Only together we can make this happen for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you.