

**Informal Summary**  
**Ministerial Roundtable**  
**Ending the cycle of food crises: cultivating a home-grown Green  
Revolution in Africa 2007**  
**Substantive Session of ECOSOC**  
**4 July 2007, Geneva**

Organizers: The roundtable was organized by FAO, IFAD, WFP, ECA, UNDP and ILC.

Participants:

Member states, observer states UN organizations and civil society

Panel Members:

Victor Borges, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cape Verde (Co-Chair);

David Harcharik, Deputy Director-General, FAO (Co-Chair);

Kanayo Nwanze, Vice President, IFAD (Moderator);

Ato Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia;

Elias Nyamlell Wakason, State Minister for International Cooperation, Sudan;

Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa;

Jerome Gefu, Board Member, Land Net West Africa;

Jeffrey Sachs, Adviser to the Secretary General on the MDGs (Lead Discussant);

Daly Belgasmi, Director, WFP Geneva Office (Rapporteur)

## **SUMMARY**

### **Executive Summary**

1. The roundtable discussion focused on the key elements of an African Green Revolution and identified a set of practical recommendations for implementing or 'cultivating' a Green Revolution in Africa under African leadership within the context of a changing international development cooperation environment and U.N. country-level reform.

2. Participants in the discussion agreed that a transformation of the agricultural sector to increase production and promote economic development is entirely possible and is already underway in many parts of the region. There are many challenges to structural transformation and sustainable development of

agriculture in Africa, but also many opportunities. What is required is an integrated solution package that must include:

- Political will and leadership;
- Focus on agriculture as the engine of growth in Africa and focus, within the agriculture sector, on small-holder and women farmers which make up the majority of rural producers in the region;
- Improved market access through infrastructure development, and development of commodity and input value chains connecting rural producers with consumers and inputs;
- Strengthen capacities of African institutions to reinvigorate agricultural research, secure access to land and enforce property rights, and improve delivery of services to rural areas.
- Improved regional integration through the establishment of regional trade and investment zones, and regional cooperation in technology development and transfer
- Increased public and private investments in agriculture and rural development, and stronger donor support to the sector

## **Issues and Discussion**

3. The term “Green Revolution” describes the transformation of agriculture that many countries in Asia and Latin America underwent in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in increased food production, rural incomes and transformation of the rural economy. But the Green Revolution of the 1950s also produced concerns over environmental degradation, deepening of income inequalities and bypassing the individuals most susceptible to hunger and food insecurity. While there is broad agreement that a Green Revolution in Africa has great potential to substantially increase economic development, caution needs to be exercised not to duplicate the experience of the Green Revolution in Asia as African circumstances differ substantially. Instead, Africa should seek to benefit from the lessons learned from the Asian experience.

4. Participants on the discussion focused on the key elements of the African development experience and shared ideas and suggestions on how to support Africa in its efforts to increase agricultural productivity and improve food security. The recurrent problems of food and hunger in Africa are linked to repeated food crises, low agricultural production, infertile soil, lack of agricultural policy, high costs of inputs, lack of access to markets, very high infant mortality and morbidity, high rates of chronic malnutrition, and increasing migration from rural to urban areas. Additionally, there is a lack of policy to promote ownership, water management, and rural infrastructure. Participants also referred in positive terms to the commitment of the African leaders to allocate 10% of their public budgets for agriculture (the Maputo Declaration).

5. It was noted by many that Governments had already taken a number of steps towards a green revolution. Furthermore, there is an important role to be played by NEPAD. All parties highlighted that this was a complex issue, requiring a complex set of responses. This includes the participation of all actors - development partners, public and private partnership - and the need for solutions to be in the context of Africa, specific and owned by the Africans. Solutions should also include new policy directions with appropriate rural development, clear dialogue among all involved parties with strong political commitment, and appropriate agricultural financing system. Participants referred to the need to focus also on agricultural research with strong rural support services, speaking about the need to focus on food security, self-sufficiency, appropriate food distribution channels and national, and international market access. All participants agreed on the importance of the empowerment of women and education, enabling the appropriate environment, and clear communication strategies with appropriate comprehensive packages in the country to support the Green Revolution. Comments were made that the subsidization of farmers could also be done by African Governments. In addition, there were views expressed on how to address the efficiency of a Green Revolution in Africa and growing food locally.

6. In these cases, food aid can be specific, targeted and at the same time used to build local capacities, such as investments in health (through micronutrients) or education (school feeding). In Sudan, for example, there is the need to address areas of food need, e.g. to buy food locally and distribute with the objective of building capacities and to lead to a Green Revolution. A package of solutions and strong partnerships are indispensable in this regard.

7. A strong message coming from Jeffery Sachs, lead discussant on the panel, was that it is not necessary to wait for the all the pieces to be in place before getting started, and instead proposed the possibility of beginning with small steps. He added that additional resources are needed, and perhaps a global fund for agriculture should be established. Furthermore, UNDP/ECA/FAO/IFAD/WFP and all partners should work together in a coherent way to address the problems. Within the African context, decentralization was needed for quick delivery to villages without overhead costs. There are market linkages; the first step is food security in local villages.

## **Conclusion**

8. In essence, the roundtable discussion recognized that a Green Revolution has considerable potential to foster economic growth and development in Africa. Yet, there are significant challenges that need to be overcome in order to accelerate transformation of the agricultural sector in the region. A comprehensive package of solutions is required that includes ownership by Governments,

leadership by Governments in forging strategic partnerships, focusing on agriculture as an engine of economic growth, increased resources for the agricultural sector and rural development, and the need for investments from both national and donor sources.