



**43rd Session of the Commission on Population and Development
Statement by Lila H. Ratsifandrihamanana, Director FAO Liaison Office
with the United Nations
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Chairperson, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the 43rd Session of the Commission on Population and Development on behalf of FAO. We welcome the opportunity to join forces with other UN agencies in support to the work of the Commission on Population and development and we are pleased to see the focus given in this session on health, morbidity, mortality and development.

FAO is very much aware that poor health is having a devastating impact on human development in a growing number of countries. Morbidity and mortality also constitute particularly serious threats to agricultural production and the food security of millions of people around the globe.

As governments take stock of the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, FAO urges that more attention be given to the fundamental connection between health and food security. FAO estimates that the total number of undernourished people in the world has now reached 1.02 billion. By 2050 the world's population will reach 9.1 billion, over 30 percent higher than today. FAO estimates that in order to feed this larger, more urban and richer global population, food production must increase by 70 percent. Efforts to raise agricultural productivity will require massive investment in rural infrastructure, increased skills among food producers and operators, while at the same time building effective food safety systems.

According to FAO estimates, recent years have been devastating for the world's hungry and the total number of undernourished people in the world has now reached 1.02 billion. A growing number of countries must shoulder a "double burden" of malnutrition, with the persistence of undernutrition along with a rapid rise in overweight and diet-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and coronary heart disease.

Food safety policies must therefore aim at achieving the highest possible levels of protection for human health and consumers' interests. FAO's work on food safety emphasises the need for effective food safety controls by all actors working in food production, processing and marketing, as well as in education.

The fact that human health, agriculture and development are closely linked presents a number of opportunities to foster inter-sectoral collaboration. Similarly, agriculture and trade should supply adequate amounts and varieties of good quality, safe and affordable foods to strengthen nutritional status of vulnerable groups, while at the same time keeping under control emerging problems of overnutrition and diet-related chronic disease.

Hunger and poor nutrition have considerable health consequences on vulnerable populations, particularly pregnant women, nursing mothers, young children and the elderly, as well as people living with HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and related disease conditions. Also, the majority of people affected by HIV and AIDS depend on agriculture, and their livelihoods are severely undermined by the disease. Improving nutrition and food security of AIDS-affected groups is therefore a very significant component of responses to the epidemic. FAO has developed policy and programmatic tools to promote nutrition support in AIDS care, treatment and impact mitigation.

It emerged from FAO's work that the agricultural sector can play a key role in improving human health by supporting rural livelihoods, improving nutrition, and actively promoting gender equality in access to and control over productive resources. Key challenges include inadequate funding for health services in rural areas and the continued lack of national capacities to effectively dovetail agriculture-based interventions with public health measures.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, FAO is convinced that nutrition and food security are critical elements of public health and central components for human, social, and economic development. We are fully committed to addressing the linkages between human health and development in the areas of its competence, and therefore entirely supports the message of this session.