



# AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

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## **Agriculture Development and Food Security**

**Statement by Mr Barry Haase MP  
Member of the Parliament of Australia**

(Check against delivery)

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Thank-you Mr Chairman

The delegation of Australia would like to add its sincere condolences to those in the United States and in the Caribbean who have suffered the impacts of Hurricane Sandy, including the families and loved ones of those who tragically lost their lives.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report, and for the remarks of the distinguished speakers before me.

They highlight the ongoing plight of nearly 1 billion people worldwide who are hungry, and the urgent need to increase agricultural production through sustainable agricultural practices.

Despite improvements in supplies of some commodities, and improved international policy settings, the Food and Agricultural Organisation tells us that agricultural output growth has declined and is now just 1.7 per cent per year.

We also know that agricultural production will need to increase by 60 per cent over the next 40 years to meet the rising demand for food. Supplies of agricultural commodities remain low by historic levels and are insufficient to withstand global production shortfalls due to climatic events.

Mr Chairman

Australia understands the importance of the agricultural sector - and the challenges it faces – not just in our own country but across the world. Land degradation, climate change and reduced water availability are putting increased pressure on the environment and the farmers who utilise the land.

There is no longer a choice; we must adopt sustainable agricultural practices if we are to address food insecurity now and in the future.

Improved agricultural practices and technology are key factors in improving yields and protecting the environment.

In Australia, the widespread adoption of agricultural best practice, such as minimum till and variable application of fertiliser and pesticides, results in more efficient use of inputs and better environmental outcomes - a win for agricultural productivity and the environment.

The use of mobile phones by farmers in developing countries to find the best market for their produce is another practical example of how technologies can be used to maximise the returns for farmers.

We need to continue to encourage the widespread adoption and use of technology in farming.

Increased support for agricultural research and development, in partnership with the private sector, will create the scientific knowledge required to improve agricultural productivity and protect the environment.

Australia is increasing its investments in agricultural research and development through key strategic partnerships, including the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research,

the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, and the Australian International Food Security Centre, which recently established its first office in Africa – in Nairobi, Kenya.

Mr Chairman

It is our view that a comprehensive approach to food security must include an increased focus on agricultural production and distribution, and increased investment in agricultural research, development and extension.

But it must also include emergency assistance and longer term protection for the most vulnerable.

And it must include appropriate economic and trade policies, and open and efficient markets to maximise food trade flows - locally and internationally.

Australia's aid program supports this comprehensive approach by helping to address the food security challenges of the poorest, including smallholder producers in developing countries.

We know that women are key contributors to agricultural production throughout the developing world.

To ensure food security outcomes are sustained over the long term we need to make sure that women have access and the capability to adopt and benefit from new agricultural technologies and inputs.

Australia is also strengthening and improving access to markets in developing countries.

This includes assisting poor women and men access the value chains and financial services necessary to set up viable and sustainable small enterprises.

And we are supporting a growing number of social protection programs to ensure that those most in need have regular access to food, and the means to manage the risks posed by food supply shocks and higher food prices.

Mr Chairman

Australia remains committed to agricultural trade liberalisation across the globe as a means of increasing returns for farmers, and providing greater access to supply for all countries, particularly those who are net food importers.

As Chair of the Cairns Group, Australia has consistently advocated against the ongoing use of production and trade-distorting subsidies, market access barriers and export subsidies in advanced developed countries.

These measures do not provide a model for developing countries seeking to stimulate agricultural production and improve domestic food security. Subsidies and barriers to trade insulate a country's farmers and reduce their competitiveness, profitability and innovation.

Open and efficient agricultural and food markets supported by appropriate economic and trade policies will create a profitable and competitive agricultural sector in all countries.

Mr Chairman

Australia seeks to build resilience to natural crises through our domestic policy reforms and a better prepared farm sector, and we will continue to share this knowledge with developing countries.

We would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Government of Bolivia for its leadership in promoting the contribution of quinoa to food and nutrition security. In this context, Australia welcomes the International Year of Quinoa in 2013.

Australia remains committed to making a comprehensive and practical contribution towards global food security.

Thank you.