

**Seminar on World Food Day 22 October 2010****Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Sirkka-Liisa Anttila****Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to be here at the World Food Day Seminar, organised jointly by the University of Helsinki, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Finnish FAO Committee. It is most important also for us Finns to have this kind of forums, where we can learn about and discuss the global food situation, research in sectors that are relevant for food issues and, in particular, the impacts of climate change on food security.

As we all know, on the global scale access to sufficient amounts of food and pure drinking water is far from being self-evident. The world population is growing fast – by as many as 80 million people each year. In the future producing food for nine billion people is not going to be an easy task, also because the climate change makes production more difficult in many of today's most important food production regions. By 2050 we should be able to produce 70 per cent more food than at present. What is more important than ever before is that food is produced in a way that is economically profitable, while being sustainable in terms of both the ecological and social considerations.

The truth is, unfortunately, that hunger keeps growing in the world. Some decades back only few people would have believed that the number of people suffering from hunger could rise above one billion. However, there is some comfort in the fact that the number one Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations, reducing hunger and poverty by half by the year 2015, is likely to be realised at least partly. The efforts to reduce poverty have been more successful, but reducing hunger has fallen short of the targets.

At the moment agriculture and food security are clearly the most important themes of the development policy. Almost a half of the people in the developing countries live in rural areas and gain their living, directly or indirectly, from agriculture. More than two-thirds of the people who live in extreme poverty live in the countryside. This means that agriculture is truly in a key position!

The development policy outlines for agriculture and food security of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs were completed this autumn. They are founded on the Development Policy Programme of Finland adopted in 2007, and they complement the outlines for rural, forest and environmental policies, water issues and humanitarian aid, which have been published earlier. The development policy outlines for agriculture and food security define the main principles and operative practices of Finnish development cooperation in the agriculture and food sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Food security is composed of the supply and availability of food, on the one hand, and the ability and means of the people to obtain food for their own use, on the other. Further elements of food security include the quality of food, securing a continuous and steady supply of foodstuffs, and the distribution of the supply between population groups and regions, as well as within households. The development policy outlines on agriculture and food policy are specifically targeted to improving the access to and quality of food. Food security depends on numerous factors – besides the two most significant global megatrends, population growth and climate change, trade policy has a major role to play in this.

We are well aware of the fact that all countries in the world are not capable of ensuring the food security of their own citizens, but they need help from the richer countries. This kind of help can be organised in various ways. Finland's bilateral development cooperation on agriculture and food security is founded on development plans of the cooperation partners, that is, the target countries. Finland supports agricultural production aimed at reaching a better level of food security within the countries themselves, and Finland will continue to increase, in a controlled manner, the development cooperation funding for agriculture and food security. We are also trying to target our important work to countries and issues where the needs of the countries and Finnish resources and the value added we can offer meet the best.

A significant share of the small farmers in the developing countries are women. These women are in a key position in terms of global food security as they see to the food supply of their own families and home villages by cultivating the lands and keeping livestock. All too often, however, these women have no opportunities for social influence. In many countries women have no rights to the lands they cultivate and it is much more difficult for

them than for men to obtain funding to be invested in farming. Obviously, it is quite impossible to eradicate hunger from the world without significant progress in gender equality. It is most appropriate that in the future, too, Finnish support will be targeted to help small farmers in the developing countries, with special attention to rural women.

### **Dear Participants,**

Considering the challenges for the future, food production must continue in all the present production regions, and new areas must also be taken up for cultivation. Climate change may also bring along an even greater and more diverse global responsibility for us Finns. We must take care of our own food production but, within the limits of our capacities, we must give our contribution to the global food supply through products that depend on pure waters and lands, which we have in abundance in Finland compared to many other countries.

The future challenges were among the main background factors for the preparation of a Finnish food strategy for the future. The proposal for the strategy, Food for Tomorrow, was completed last summer and the food policy report based on it was issued quite recently. The purpose of the reports is to give a broad and comprehensive view of the circumstances where the Finnish food supply needs to be ensured in the future and outline our international responsibilities in terms of the global food security.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Food security and sustainable production of foodstuffs for the growing world population call for broad cooperation among the states, scientific communities, NGOs, food producers, and the private sector. It is vital that the most recent research results are quickly and readily available to support the political decision-making. The challenges ahead are great, but I am confident that we shall be capable of facing them with considerable success through national and international cooperation.

This seminar is also an important forum for this kind of cooperation! I wish you all a very interesting seminar!