

Food Security: Not (Just) a Development Issue

In recognition of the need to raise food production by 70% to cope with rapid growth, the G8 committed US\$20 billion to a sustainable agricultural development fund in 2009. CropLife International, the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) and CropLife Canada wholeheartedly support this initiative to tackle one of the world's most intractable problems: **food security**.

One year later, we call on the G8 to ensure that this important issue does not become yesterday's news. We call on the G8 to focus on ensuring that the funds committed are channeled for maximum impact, efficiently and based on local needs. Food security is fully achievable. But in addition to investment, its achievement requires significant political will, and coordinated, targeted policies.

Agriculture must produce more food while preserving threatened natural resources, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. That's an enormous undertaking – not just for farmers, but for legislators who must balance these concerns in a way that feeds the world.

We can't simply put more land under the plough. Arable land is severely limited and we can't afford to keep cutting down forests to expand agricultural lands. Deforestation for food production is the single largest contributing factor to the rise in greenhouse gases and the destruction of biodiversity. We must grow more food on the existing land base.

Our industry recognizes the crucial role that technologies such as crop protection and quality seed – including biotech seed – play in helping to achieve food security. Without crop protection products, crop losses around the world would be approximately 40-80%. Beyond existing yield benefits, biotech crops have the potential to further increase yields globally by up to 25%.¹

However, plant science is not a silver bullet. There are six key issues that need to be addressed through coordinated, effective policies before food security can become a reality: agricultural productivity, global and local trade, sustainable resource management, improved infrastructure, rural poverty and fostering innovation. These priority areas are aligned with the **Farming First** policy platform, which we actively support.

Agricultural productivity



- We must sustainably increase productivity on existing lands.
- This requires more investment in agriculture. The LAquila Fund will help, but a corresponding commitment to agricultural investment from the recipient countries will be critical to success.
- Increasing productivity in food insecure countries is not enough. In an interdependent age, falls in productivity in one region impact food security in another. For example, reducing productivity in Europe due to restrictive legislation is predicted to lead to expansion of land to meet Europe's food needs in the developing world.² We call on the G8 to remember the importance of sustaining and supporting productivity in all regions.
- This presupposes facilitative, science-based policies. Recent regulatory developments in Europe that restrict the availability of technology to farmers without scientific basis are of great concern. It is hoped that such regulation will be reconsidered in Europe and certainly not replicated elsewhere.
- The private sector currently accounts for one-third of all agricultural R&D³, which it invests in the lengthy process of researching and developing new, improved solutions for growing more food sustainably. It takes almost 10 years from discovery to market approval of a new crop protection product, costing over US\$250 million.⁴
- By broadening application of existing technologies and knowledge, agricultural productivity can be increased – currently, yields in parts of the developing world reach only 20% of those achieved in the developed world.
- Public-private partnerships are an effective way of sharing knowledge, enabling market access and facilitating access to inputs. More such cross-sector collaborations are needed.

Global and local trade



- Efficient food production requires open, fair, and well-functioning global markets.
- This presupposes removal of trade barriers, such as export restrictions.
- Many countries depend on international trade for food security. Developing countries' net cereal imports are expected to more than double by 2050. To address this vulnerability, investment is needed in rural infrastructure, services, R&D and access to technology.
- Risk reduction policies and joint measures among countries that are food import-dependent are needed to better equip them to withstand future shocks.

Sustainable resource management



- Biodiversity and natural resources, such as land and water, are under unprecedented pressure.
- Agriculture impacts these natural resources. To ensure that agriculture helps preserve natural resources, policies should inform and incentivise farmers to adopt more sustainable farming practices.
- A key step to preserving biodiversity is to prevent encroachment on wild habitat by using the most productive agricultural methods on existing farm lands and thereby minimizing the expansion of farmland.⁵
- Agriculture currently consumes 70% of all blue water.⁶ Infrastructure and technology are key to improving water use efficiency. Better irrigation and water transportation systems can make a big difference. Advances in plant sciences can enable plants to more efficiently utilize water – biotech-derived drought tolerant crops will be able to maintain crop yields with less water, and preserve crop productivity in times of drought.
- Climate change will render vast swathes of land uncultivable, threatening millions of rural livelihoods. Concerted, decisive international action on climate change is critical.

Improved infrastructure



- Improved infrastructure is needed to improve crop production and quality, reduce post-harvest losses and to secure farmers' access to inputs and markets.
- Poor infrastructure in developing markets means that often inputs such as crop protection, seed and fertiliser cannot reach the farmer.
- In areas where there is no road or transportation, taking goods to market becomes almost impossible, preventing many smallholder farmers from ever entering the marketplace.
- Post-harvest losses are highest among smallholders, largely due to lack of storage infrastructure, leaving produce susceptible to attacks by pests and disease.

Rural poverty



- With rising urbanisation, there is a real risk that rural and agricultural communities will be neglected further by government policies. This must be avoided.
- 75% of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas. Often, they cannot feed themselves and as net food buyers, are very sensitive to food price increases.
- They need purchasing power to avoid hunger – food availability alone is not enough.
- Economic growth in the rural and agricultural sectors – particularly among smallholders – is twice as effective at benefiting the poor as growth in other sectors.⁷

Fostering innovation



- Increasing agricultural productivity sustainably requires continued innovation for new, improved technologies and knowledge.
- To do this, we need more investment in research, by both public and private sectors.
- Innovation in plant science holds vast potential. More targeted and impactful crop protection technologies and improved plant varieties, including biotech varieties, already help farmers grow more food with a smaller environmental footprint.
- Policies should foster and incentivize such innovation. Clearly defined, robust intellectual property protection systems are indispensable.
- Farmer-centric and locally-relevant research must be prioritized to ensure impactful and relevant outcomes.
- Improved, broader extension services are a must to ensure appropriate knowledge and technology reaches the farmer. Public-private partnerships have a key role here.

We believe that with a commitment among policymakers to addressing the above issue areas, food security is fully achievable. We call on the G8 to ensure that the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative is targeted, impactful, and builds on existing international processes, to make food security a reality for this generation, and for our future generations.



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