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**Agricultural Technologies and Innovations
Meeting local needs in a globalised world?**

**SESSION 2: Global food supply - Agricultural, Industrial and Biosafety
considerations**

AGRICULTURAL REALITIES

**by David King, Secretary General, International Federation of
Agricultural Producers (IFAP)**

Mr. Chairman,

Essentially, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is a platform, or forum, for farmers from different countries to exchange ideas and experiences, and work together to improve the livelihoods of the farming community. There are at present 100 national farmers' organisations in membership of the Federation, representing a total of over 500 million farm families. The previous speaker, Shirley Harrison, is a member of the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and so is one of the 500 million.

The agricultural industry has done pretty well over the past 30 years. Productivity growth from successful agricultural research and development has pushed food production ahead of population growth. The proportion of hungry people dropped from 35 per cent to 17 percent over this period. However, this progress needs to be continued.

World food production will need to be doubled over the next 25 years in order to meet the needs of the growing population. At the same time, pressure by

agriculture on fragile ecosystems needs to be reduced, so agriculture will need to be more intensive but environmentally sensitive.

Globalisation is bringing our political leaders together to consult more and more at the international level. There have been a proliferation of global summits and international treaties in recent years, each with the objective of adjusting national policies to one another and develop a common international agenda.

The common agenda that has emerged from these global deliberations is centred on what is known as "sustainable development". Sustainable development is now of the driving force of national farm programs, the regulatory framework for agriculture, development assistance programs, and even world trade negotiations.

Per Pinstrup Andersen talked about "sustainability", but what does this word mean for the farmers?

The concept of sustainability differs from country to country.

In developing countries, the priority is to achieve food security and create jobs in the rural areas. The benefits of globalisation are not being shared equally, and many developing countries are being left behind. Yet over 90 per cent of the growth in the world's population is occurring in the developing countries. They are the markets of the future, but they first need to generate some purchasing power.

Since 75 per cent of the poverty is located in the rural areas, agriculture has to be the key sector for attention in the fight against poverty. Thus, after a decade of neglect, agriculture has now moved back as a priority for international development.

IFAP and CropLife must exploit this opportunity, and try to build synergies with this new international development agenda.

Our Federation is convinced that technology has a key role in driving progress in agriculture. In fact, it is clear to us that the 'poverty gap' can be equated to a 'technology gap'. Both our organisations have a common interest in trying to close this gap.

We would like to explore with CropLife International public-private partnerships on technology transfer as part of development and technical assistance programs. You are already involved in many outreach programs, as shown in the excellent publication you produced for the Johannesburg Summit. However, more could be done if there was a more structured relationship

between farmers' organisations in developing countries and your affiliates, especially to work on technologies that build on local knowledge and add value to local resources. Also farmers need more information on developments in modern biotechnologies.

One of the most pressing development challenges is to help farmers in developing countries to go beyond producing food only for their families and produce a surplus to sell in commercial markets. Transforming subsistence producers into entrepreneurs is perhaps the key to winning the fight against poverty and hunger.

Financial crises in many developing countries have resulted in major cuts in national research budgets and in extension services. Farmers' organisations are trying to help fill this gap by undertaking extension and training services for their members. They are seeking assistance to set up advisory services, farmer field schools, research user platforms and even public-private research centres where farmers can commission research. Such extension work is critically important for reversing the degradation of land and water resources, as well as mitigating the effects of global warming and deforestation. Such work is also important for export sales where developing countries have to meet ever more stringent health, safety and quality standards to enter industrialised country markets. So that we hope that we can partner with you in this area.

Farmers' organisations are keen to strengthen partnerships. However, in order to be successful each partner needs to be organised, and often farmers in developing countries are not organised. Programs are therefore needed to build capacity in farmers' organisations in developing countries. Strong farmers organisations will allow farmers to play a full role as responsible partners in the development process, including advocacy work to ensure that the policy and regulatory framework facilitates the adoption of new technologies.

The situation in the industrialised countries is also very much influenced by the situation in the developing countries. Farm subsidies in the OECD countries are being attacked by some people for aggravating poverty in developing countries. Thus the global agenda of poverty eradication is casting its shadow over the policy reform process in the industrialised countries, and particularly in Europe.

But industrialised countries have their own concerns too. The concept of sustainability in these countries is viewed mainly in terms of food safety and quality, countryside management, and maintaining rural culture and traditions.

Most industrialised countries are following two objectives in their agricultural policies. The first objective is to promote a competitive, market-oriented agricultural system that is capable of surviving on more open markets. The

second objective is to provide a framework in which to meet the many expectations that consumers and the general public have for their agriculture.

The first objective is mainly related to ‘making markets work’. All too often, agricultural markets are distorted by certain types of government policies, or by the concentration of market power in the hands of a few private companies. Concentration is particularly strong in the food retail distribution sector. They put pressure on the food companies to consolidate, and eventually the pressure ends up on the farmer. And when farmers’ incomes are under pressure, sales of farm inputs decline. CropLife and IFAP therefore have a further common interest in making sure that farmers are not only technically efficient, but also economically viable.

Another reality in industrialised countries is that farmers are under intense pressure from consumers on food safety and quality issues. Consumers want to know more about how and where their food is produced, and they are increasingly concerned about the healthiness of what they eat. The BSE crisis fundamentally changed the attitudes of consumers to farm policy in Europe. Now, food safety is at the top of the agenda. As a result, new demands are placed on farmers, and regulation of farming and food production is increasing.

In a global market, it is important to develop fair, realistic and harmonised standards for food safety. We therefore need to keep active in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, FAO and other international organisations dealing with standards and regulations. In future, farmers or will have to work closer with other partners in ensuring that traceability requirements are met.

At the same time as consumers are putting pressure on farmers on food safety and quality issues, the general public is putting pressure on farmers concerning environmental issues.

Farmers are responsible for the management of a large part of the cultivable land and freshwater supplies of the planet, so that it is not surprising that governments are interested in regulating how these natural resources are being managed.

In the industrialised countries, there are many examples of government programs to protect the environment. These include: measures to reduce the use of pesticides and the loss of soil nutrients, rewarding farmers for stewardship or environmental services, promoting organic agriculture, maintaining biodiversity, and the development of protected areas.

Farmers, with the support of the crop science industry, have done much to rationalise the use of farm chemicals, promote IPM and other good stewardship practices. CropLife International has been a leader in trying to promote dialogue with farmers and other partners in the agri-food chain through the

International Agri-Food Network, especially on environmental issues. But we still have a lot more work to do. A harder push is needed for harmonising the testing and registration systems for farm chemicals and for accelerating the process of licensing new products, so that farmers everywhere have access to the best science and technology as it becomes available. At the same time, we have to be convincing to the general public that we are serious about food safety and environmental stewardship. Farmers must farm responsibly and companies should be vigilant about corporate responsibility.

In concluding, I want to stress that after more than a decade of neglect, governments have woken up to the fact that problems of poverty and under-development are largely agricultural problems. All of us in agriculture must exploit this new interest in our sector to promote a science-based, knowledge-intensive global agricultural system that supplies appropriate and affordable agricultural technologies to farmers.

Only in this way will young farmers and rural communities have a future to look forward to, with opportunities to share in the extraordinary wealth of this Planet, and contribute to its survival.

Thank you.