

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Statement by Franco Scaramuzzi¹

Nowadays modern technologies make it possible to communicate among all corners of the world in real time, to spread a growing delocalization of production activities even in different continents, and to stimulate many important and continuous changes. Having overcome the ancient obstacle of geographical distances, extensive and direct work relations are being established among different localities, even far removed from one another, in a global dimension. Springing to the surface, therefore, is the need for new forms of aggregation among geographically distant territories, linked by common interests and connected by modern networks of communication and other ways of complementary integration. In a word, emerging is the need for solutions, other than current multinational corporate organizations, but able to reduce the hurdles of borders.

The non predictability of a huge number of factors, beginning from new and increasingly scientific knowledge and technological innovations, can in no way plead in favor of not making an effort to understand the logic underlying probable future scenarios. Political power seems “inattentive” and often gives way to individual initiatives that propose independent innovative models of production systems, which all too often, unfortunately, leave out agricultural activities. This is the most serious mistake being made today by those who measure the importance of agriculture by only using the misleading GDP criterion.

The FAO has already forecast that the sharp increase of the world population and its requirements in the decades to come will make it necessary to double the current production of food. Since it is no longer possible to increase the arable land areas in the world, also for environmental protection aims, it will above all be necessary to further increase production yields, focusing on the potential of new scientific discoveries, beginning with those of molecular genetics. Instead of persisting in increasing environmental fertility with higher doses of nutritional input (water, fertilizers, etc.), that are ever less available, more costly and polluting, we should count on the availability of new genetically modified plant breeds able to increase and improve production yields even in less fertile and less favourable conditions. All countries are called upon to take action to protect the arable land areas still available and increase their yields per hectare. Moreover, it is the duty of all countries to reduce the rise in their respective imports from the global market. The agro-food supply chains should not forget that their first and irreplaceable production phase is agriculture, and they should therefore be careful about the risk of remaining without domestic primary products as a result of having placed full trust in the ever changing and risky global market. Today we need to reconcile the sound principles of free trade with the need for an equitable distribution of the world food production. Nonetheless, today’s global market deserves closer attention, because in the advanced importing countries it can seriously condition the selfsame survival of domestic agricultural production. In a situation of an increasing trend of demand and a decreasing supply, price volatility, *per se*, is already a cause for serious concern. But it is all the more so, ever since the G20 Summit held in Paris last February, was devoted to the dangerous forms of financial speculation linked to the very global trade of food commodities.

Emerging more and more among the solutions thus far advanced by the various world Summits on the main issues tackled (food security, energy resources, protection of the environment, climate change) is the strategic importance of agriculture.

“*The need for a decisive strategic relaunching of agriculture*” was underlined again by Pope Benedict XVI during the Angelus on 14 November last year.

Global food security does not only entail the problem of “world hunger”, and of an unacceptable shortage of food in specific parts of the world. There are many other interacting factors in a global market still in need of rules agreed upon and respected by all.

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