



Brussels Rural Development Briefings
A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

Briefing session n° 15
From Global Food Crisis to Local Food Insecurity

Wednesday 9th December 2009 – 8h30 – 13h00

The IAASTD Reports: A holistic approach to food and nutrition security
Hans R Herren - IAASTD

Executive Summary

Agriculture at a Crossroads the report series from the International assessment of agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was initiated during the Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit in 2002, and had its final Plenary Session there in April 2008, where the reports were endorsed by 59 countries and welcomed by another three. It is the result of 6 years of consultations, research and writing by a unique stakeholder group led by a bureau with representatives from International Development Agencies, Governments, Civil Society, policy makers, scientists and the private sector from around the world.

The key questions that had been defined at eleven stakeholder meetings around the world, and which the reports were to address were “how can agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (AKSTs) be improved to reduce hunger and poverty, improve health and nutrition, assure rural livelihoods and reduce inequities while protecting the environment”.

The questions asked cover the very wide spectrum from food production to consumption, with all the intermediate steps and their consequences past, present and future. The reports, which cover the global and five regional levels have addressed agriculture's multifunctionality and role in the in society, economy and environment, while emphasizing the particular role of agriculture to combat poverty and so hunger and mal / under-nutrition and assure food security into an uncertain future that will be impacted by climate change, loss of biodiversity and higher energy prices. The report also emphasizes women in agriculture and their key role in health and nutrition.

The Report calls for a change in paradigm, and change in the course of today's unsustainable agricultural practices, in the developed and in the developing countries. Business as usual is no longer an option, if we want to assure the quality and quantity of food needed for a growing population with increased and more diverse needs. For the medium and long term and with the expected climate change impact on the environment we grow our food, feed, fiber and fuels, the changes towards sustainable practices that not only conserve soil, water and the diversity of landscape and life, but improve them, will become ever more pressing.

The IAASTD Reports refers to the food security and sovereignty issues (also with their very important implications for nutrition) as the bases for immediate action in changing agricultural practices by implementing sustainable agricultural practices such as organic agriculture, agro-ecology, by diversifying the crop and animal genetic and varietal / species bases and increasing investment across the board from research to education and extension, infrastructure and institutions.