



Experts call for increased research efforts and public investments as well as for a radical rethink of the current global food system

Brussels, March 20, 2012 - International experts from the UN, the EU and civil society have called for a radical rethink of the current global food system. Europe must play a decisive role in ensuring food security, poverty reduction and strengthening animal welfare standards at this critical time.

Speaking at a joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Compassion in World Farming conference today in Brussels, **Dr Modibo Traoré**, Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Consumer Protection at the FAO, a national from Mali and a veterinary doctor by training, said *"Significant research efforts and public investments are necessary, not only to strengthen and improve governance in this sector, but also to ensure that growing demands for animal products are managed sustainably to contribute to poverty reduction, food security, preservation of environmental, public health and animal welfare in the world."* Leading world experts, diplomats, policy makers and MEPs were attending the evening discussion, entitled **"Ensuring Fair Food and Farming for the Future"**, which sought to identify positive, cross-sector alternatives to the "business as usual" farming model.

"The meatification of diets and the increased demand for feedstock and pastures has considerable impacts not only on the level and volatility of grain prices, but also on the environment: it is this reality that we must now face," said **Dr Olivier De Schutter**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, United Nations.

Philip Lymbery, Chief Executive of the world leading farm animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming said, *"What is blatantly obvious is that an urgent rethink of our food and farming systems is needed."* He pointed to evidence that, far from leading to greater food security, intensive livestock farm systems waste food and put farm animals in direct competition with people for grain.

Lymbery called for an approach to EU and global food production that goes beyond the simple focus on quantity of output. Waste and industrial meat production lies at the heart of the issue according to Lymbery: *"Our society currently wastes nearly half its food."* He continued, *"We feed farm animals with grain which could be fed to humans and could satisfy the needs of billions of people."* Lymbery released a new report to accompany his speech at the event, in which he calls for a common-sense approach to EU and global food production that goes beyond the simple focus on quantity of output and efficiency, and creates food systems which are *effective* at feeding people. According to figures presented in his report 'Food Sense' (LINK www.ciwf.org/foodsense), for every six kilos of protein, such as cereals, fed to livestock only one kilo of protein on average is given back in the form of meat or other livestock products. Furthermore, for every 100 food calories of edible crops fed to livestock, we get back just 30 calories in the form of meat and milk. That's a 70% loss. *"The truth is that factory farms are food factories in reverse; they waste it, not make it."* he said.

The message is clear: reduce meat consumption, avoid wasting food and get livestock off the grain and back onto grass, forage and recycling food wastes. *"Through these simple, fast, cheap and effective measures, the grain and cereal currently used to feed the animals, can be diverted directly to feed billions of people."* he said.

As discussion intensifies on the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU finance mechanism for supporting farming across all member states in the EU, which will be revised next year, **Mr Jeremy Wates**, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau, criticised the current Commission legislative proposals as too timid. He argued that *“Only meaningful changes in the current agricultural subsidy systems will help the EU achieve sustainable agriculture,”*. *“The CAP will only regain its legitimacy if it uses the funds for a long term investment in the protection of the resource base that underpins all farming,”* he said, pointing at widespread unsustainable farming and livestock practices based upon monocultures and over-dependence on pesticides, fertilisers and feed imports as the single biggest threat to European food security. Mr Wates questioned the current EU CAP system, whose subsidies encourage the increasing industrialisation and over-intensification of animal production, with its focus on short-term profit, while animal welfare, people and the environment suffer. *“The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been contributing to this for several years and it is now under the spotlight for true renewal,”* he said.

Ms Despina Spanou, Principal Advisor, Directorate General for Health and Consumers also spoke at the conference.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The event was part of the **Peter Roberts Memorial Lecture** series, a yearly event bringing the views of global experts, a legacy of the farmer founder of Compassion in World Farming (ciwf.org). For further information on the initiative and past speakers please click [here](#) or visit compassion-lecture.org

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