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Alimentación y la Agricultura

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COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

Seventy-first Session

Rome, 4–6 October 2016

Chairperson's Summary of the Fourth Ministerial Meeting on Long-term Commodity Price Trends and Sustainable Agricultural Development

Presented by His Excellency Tofail Ahmed, Minister for Commerce, Bangladesh

Madam Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General

Ambassador Maria Laura da Rocha, Chairperson of the Committee on Commodity Problems

Honourable Ministers and Ambassadors

Distinguished Delegates and Guests

Members of the CCP Secretariat

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to report to you today the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting on Long-term Commodity Price Trends and Sustainable Agricultural Development, held yesterday here at FAO.

About 20 Ministers and Vice Ministers participated in the meeting, together with associations, international organizations, and the private sector. We all discussed important issues, such as commodity dependence and diversification, and the international food trade architecture. We also deliberated on climate change, including the role of trade as an adaptation tool. And we examined how trade and other policies can improve nutrition.

I would like to thank FAO and Director-General Mr Graziano da Silva for convening this meeting. For many countries, it is an important platform to exchange views and share policy experiences on agricultural commodities and trade.

This meeting, in the format of Roundtables allowed for interactive discussions, and included Ministers of Agriculture, and Ministers of Trade. I personally welcome this innovation. It made our discussions

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very rich and our dialogue both fruitful and promising. Exchanging information on our policies that address crucial issues was extremely useful.

A number of important points have emerged from our debate yesterday, and it is a pleasure to highlight some of them in my report to you.

My first point relates to commodity dependence. Agricultural commodities play an important role for growth in developing countries. Commodity price movements can have significant impacts on smallholder livelihoods, poverty and food security, but also on the economies of commodity-dependent countries.

Value addition and diversification were identified as crucial mechanisms to reduce countries' dependence on commodities, diversify agriculture and reduce vulnerability.

Our discussions identified the pathway towards value addition to depend on improving infrastructure, and building capacity mainly by Public Private Partnerships. We underlined the need to promote farmers' groups and cooperatives and to target and upgrade farmers' skills on business and marketing.

Farmers' cooperatives, by achieving volume, adding value, and marketing produce can strengthen smallholders' bargaining power in the market. This, together with access to credit can provide opportunities to smallholders and small business to integrate in value chains and reduce their dependence on basic agricultural commodities.

My second point refers to climate change. Climate change is changing the conditions of agricultural production and threatening yields. Its impact is already felt in many countries. Coping with the effects of climate change will be particularly challenging for countries with large smallholder populations, since it adds pressure over already vulnerable households.

We noted that pursuing sustainable productivity growth is key to cope with growing demand, competition for scarce resources and a changing climate. Trade will be also an important tool, within a broader set of policies and measures, to cope with climate change.

Among the priority policy areas identified were renewed investment on research and development, innovation, and improved adoption of sustainable practices by smallholders. Participants also stressed the need for support to their efforts to develop national policies that draw on their comparative advantages and are tailored to the climate challenges they face.

My third point is about the trade policy environment. Speakers referred to the significance of trade, and trade agreements, for food security and highlighted the role of trade as an enabler for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It was noted that growth in trade flows is desirable for development and economic growth. Measures that distort markets, including export subsidies and export restrictions undermine the confidence on the global trade system. The significance of the outcome of the WTO Ministerial in Nairobi last year was noted.

Further improvements would contribute to strengthening the trade system. As countries stand on different stages of agricultural development, trade policies should take their different needs into account.

My last point concerns nutrition. In our discussions, we identified that diets are the link between trade and nutrition. We discussed the opportunities that trade opens for food security and nutrition, but also highlighted the risks.

Trade helps to broaden consumers' choice through more diverse, safe, and quality food. But there are also concerns about increasing access for less nutritious food.

Trade affects undernourishment and obesity in different ways and there is need for country-specific analysis before producing policy recommendations. Using science-based principles that are based on Codex and emphasize quality and food safety can help.

There is space for better coordination of government departments – for example of agriculture, health and trade – and deeper involvement of relevant stakeholders along the food system. An example of a complementary measure between trade and nutrition is food labelling.

I trust that this Committee will take these perspectives into consideration.

I would like to thank Mr Graziano for the great organization of this fourth Ministerial Meeting on commodities.

Madam Deputy Director-General,

Madam Chairperson of the CCP,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for attention, and wish you a fruitful and successful session.