

FAO Message

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On behalf of Dr. José Graziano da Silva

Director General of FAO

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to convey welcome remarks on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to this regional forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization Strategy, which brings in a focus on “Public-Private Partnership for Improved Food Security and Rural Livelihoods.” I wish to thank my colleagues from our sister UN Organization, CSAM, for inviting FAO’s contribution to this forum.

At a global level there is no alternative but to increase agricultural productivity or crop yield per unit area to meet global food, feed and biofuel demand and to alleviate hunger and poverty. This scenario, indeed poses a great challenge for Asia and the Pacific region where population density is in many areas very high and population growth continues, while land and water resources are getting to their limits for providing food and other agricultural outputs.

Agricultural intensification has, until now, had a negative effect on the quality of many essential resources such as soil, water, land, biodiversity and ecosystem services resulting in declining yield and

factor productivity growth rates. Another challenge for agriculture is its environmental foot print and the impact of climate change. Agriculture is responsible for about 30 % of the total greenhouse gas emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, while being directly affected by the consequences of a changing climate.

The functionality of environmentally friendly agricultural management practices is highly dependent on suitable mechanization technologies. Agricultural mechanization removes the drudgery associated with agricultural labour, reduces the work load of women engaged in production activities, overcomes time and labour bottlenecks to perform tasks within optimum time windows, and can influence the environmental footprint of agriculture, leading to sustainable impacts.

The impacts of mechanization in the crop sector are, however, varied in that it can have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact of mechanization lies in its contribution to reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture, while its negative impact relates to the acceleration of environmental degradation.

While recognizing the importance of market mechanisms, the direction taken by agricultural mechanization should not only be left to market forces, particularly in view of the fact that environmental sustainability is not yet well reflected in market economies. Sustainable agricultural mechanization must, be guided by policies and strategies if it is to result in increased productivity from finite resources, with minimal negative environmental impact.

Within the current global economic paradigm the crucial role of the private sector must be recognized. Mechanization technology supply chains from manufacturer to end user must provide livelihood opportunities to all participating stakeholders and this is what will provide sustainability to the process. At the same time the public sector also has a crucial role to play in providing an enabling socio-economic environment within which mechanization technology supply chains can function effectively while reflecting the objectives of agricultural production growth and environmental protection. This includes provision and improvements to infrastructure and utility supply, as well as encouraging the supply of raw materials and markets for end products via supportive fiscal and import duty regimes.

Political support for local manufacture can have a dramatic impact on the success of local industries, resulting in a positive effect on national agricultural productivity, on world markets and last but not least on environmental sustainability. The success of the Indian and Chinese agricultural machinery industries

provides a good example of what can be achieved through the application of judicious supportive policies. Currently, India is the world's market leader in tractor production, and China is rapidly catching up, with the inclusion of elements of environmentally sustainable mechanization such as the promotion of Conservation Agriculture.

Other good examples of mechanization policies addressing the above sectors exist in the region. The spectrum covered is very broad, ranging from reducing soil degradation by introducing no-till technologies, more sustainable water management with irrigation technologies, to reducing the pressure on production by reducing post harvest losses with better storage and processing facilities.

FAO has, over the past decades, assisted member countries with the development of agricultural mechanization strategies, encouraging private sector involvement and a demand driven, market oriented approach, while at the same time stressing the importance of environmental sustainability of farming. All of this is very well documented in the FAO publication *Save and Grow*.

We have a lot of discussions and deliberations ahead of us to think around and discuss all of these issues. I would, therefore, like to end by wishing you a productive outcome to your deliberations.

Thank You.