



**Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa by 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**

**First Meeting of the Conference Advisory Committee
May 2, 2003 * Windsor Lake Victoria Hotel * Entebbe, Uganda**

Summary Minutes

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

In his opening remarks, the Chairman of the Conference Advisory Committee (CAC), Dr. Otim, noted that some of the best minds on the continent have been assembled to contribute to the road-map for a successful Conference. To guide the discussions, he posed several questions, including (i) how can the Conference output contribute to the goals of NEPAD and to other regional and national goals in Africa; and (ii) how can the planned Conference be different from those held before.

On behalf of the Government of Uganda, Minister Kisamba-Mugerwa welcomed participants to Uganda. He outlined the magnitude of food insecurity in Africa, identified key causes, and noted that while attractive policies are being designed and put in place the challenge now is to implement them. He lauded the Conference's focus on action and implementation.

IFPRI's Director General, Dr. von Braun, highlighted key trends indicating why the time is right for the planned Conference: (i) healthy nervousness on the part of high-level policymakers who committed to the World Food Summit and Millennium Summit goal of cutting hunger in half by 2015 and are increasingly haunted by questions as to why we are apparently not on track to achieve this goal; and (ii) renewed attention to agriculture and rural development on the part of the international/donor community as well as some African governments. He noted that at this meeting IFPRI will table a draft concept for the Conference and it looks to the CAC to tear it apart and help shape it into a workable, realistic, and challenging concept that can be implemented. Thereafter, Ms. Pandya-Lorch presented IFPRI's draft concept note for the Conference.

Conference Structure/Modalities/Concept

The Committee was in general agreement that the planned Conference would be useful and it should take place; that it should have value-added over and above the Conferences that have taken place; and that for it to add value and be different it must focus on issues of action and implementation, in other words on the "how" issues.

Title: There was agreement to retain the Conference title as proposed.

Overall Concept/Framework:

There was a rich and insightful exchange on whether to frame the Conference by the food and nutrition security concepts – availability, accessibility and utilization (to which were added acceptability and affordability) and its disaggregates – or by the key actors and the interactions between them – including but not limited to household, community, national, and regional levels as well as public, private, and civil society sectors. The origin of this exchange was concern about the scope of the Conference and whether/how to narrow down the coverage of issues.

The essential conclusion was that marrying the two concepts would lead to an unmanageable conference and that, given the strong support for the Conference's focus on action and implementation, the way forward lay in aggregating the food and nutrition security concepts and disaggregating the actors. This would allow the Conference to focus much more on actors and action in order to delve deep into issues like implementation, delivery, accountability, bottlenecks, which would be a major added value. Committee members nevertheless advised, given the centrality of agriculture in Africa, that issues related to production, such as productivity,

technology policy and adoption, biotechnology, storage, and basic agricultural decisions of small farmers, should be brought to the forefront.

Committee members also strongly supported the proposed focus on best practices and lessons learned. Well-prepared case studies were viewed as an important way of conveying success stories and capturing knowledge and wisdom. There were pleas that the Conference take stock of African successes. At the same time, the discussion of why Africa has made so little progress in the past was viewed as a key element of the Conference, because it would allow participants to analyze and synthesize why Africa has had failures and what the key mistakes were so that they are not repeated. It was suggested that the Conference also highlight the 10-20 activities countries should or should not do.

There was keen interest in the review and critique of various action plans, particularly those of NEPAD, regional and donor institutions, and the Millennium Development Goal task force, to help participants see how to turn good policies and decisions into action, to examine what the bottlenecks to implementation have been, and to understand how to overcome future ones.

Following an intensive discussion whether the planned Conference itself should come forth with an action plan, there was general agreement on several points: (i) it is not appropriate or necessary to decide at this meeting whether or not to have an action plan from the Conference; (ii) if there is an action plan it should be driven by the Conference itself; (iii) it does not necessarily have to be the type of plan that governments have to sign off; (iv) while IFPRI's role is to facilitate action-oriented communication and to walk alongside key actors, it is not appropriate to put IFPRI in the actor's seat or to hold it responsible for specific action plans of governments and other actors; and (v) the Conference should feed into the action planning of other actors and help them learn from each other's action plans.

A Committee member offered an alternative concept for the Conference as follows: Limit the total number of participants to 250; instead of parallel sessions, organize working groups of less than 50 participants; focus the entire second day on working group sessions, the end result of which would be the development of rough proposals for action that would be forwarded to the CAC to review and identify the most promising ones; and on the third day there would be some sort of an action market where the proposals are tabled, partners identified, and seed money provided for action. Other Committee members noted that working groups involve much more organization and work beforehand in terms of who is invited and what outcomes are sought.

It was cautioned that even as we develop and share knowledge of issues cutting across regions, the strategies for implementation are country-specific which should be reflected in the discussions. In discussions on strategies and options, it was suggested that emphasis be given to the short and medium term.

Topics/Issues: There were a number of suggestions of topics/issues to address or emphasize in the Conference (listed by and large in the order in which they came up during the meeting):

- Improving access to financial resources, particularly by small-scale and grassroots stakeholders;
- Looking at food and nutrition from a human rights perspective;
- Bridging gaps, particularly (i) the resource gap between those who have resources and those who need resources; (ii) the knowledge gap between those who have the knowledge and those who have the resources to support knowledge; and (iii) the intellectual gap between those who develop high-sounding technology and those at the grassroots who take up those technologies. It was proposed that a continental knowledge and resource exchange be established as an outcome of the Conference.
- Converting population increases into an opportunity rather than a liability;
- Tackling the barriers that impede African women to contribute meaningfully to Africa's achievement of food and nutrition security;
- Improving access to national, regional, continental, and international markets;
- Addressing conflict issues;
- Addressing governance issues, including issues of decentralization, and developing pathways to overcome governance problems;
- Addressing the challenge of HIV/AIDS;

- How do we bring about economic growth and development (long-term solution for food and nutrition security) and what do we do in the short term? Are the right policies in place? Are we putting money where the policies are? What are the appropriate public and private investments?
- What needs to be done to bring private-sector investors on board to invest in growth and development?
- How do we take care of those who are chronically hungry versus those who are hungry in certain times (transitory food insecurity)?
- Why is Africa lagging behind in agricultural productivity and what can be done?;
- Existing and emerging food and nutrition security programs and initiatives in Africa – what role do and can they play?;
- Where are the key bottlenecks in bringing about food and nutrition security in Africa? ;
- How do we change the attitudes of policymakers in Africa, and how do we resist bad policies?;
- How do we build capacity to implement the action plans and programs we develop?;
- How to make policies or resolutions that policymakers/governments commit be binding?;
- What is the appropriate strategy for African agriculture?;
- Social protection, from production to consumption;
- Pathways to strengthen the public and private delivery of public goods;
- Top-down versus bottom-up approaches – the Conference should address how actors at all levels can influence each other.

Parallel sessions: Views were mixed whether to organize some of the parallel sessions by region. Some contended that it would hinder learning from each other's experiences across regions. Others contended that a geographical divide would help to focus on the role of regional networks, which serve as a mechanism for implementation. Another suggestion was to focus on economic blocs or groupings rather than on geographical regions. It was suggested that the parallel sessions on the second day focus on bottlenecks to implementation.

Auxiliary Activities

Background Materials and Conference Publications: Suggestions included:

- Prepare a paper on the state of food and nutrition security in Africa
- Prepare a paper that defines nutrition security, clarifies how it is different from food security, and identifies different interventions across sectors to bring about nutrition security;
- Compile information on how much African countries are investing in education, health, research and so forth that lead to food and nutrition security – that would help address the question of are we investing in the right places;
- Prepare a paper analyzing action plans for food and nutrition security at national, regional, and continental levels and what are the bottlenecks to their implementation;
- Prepare an information brief for CAC members to inform partners and colleagues of the Conference;
- Produce a CD-Rom compiling information and materials of relevance to the Conference.

French Translations: In addition to the proposed simultaneous translations into French during the Conference, IFPRI was urged to make available background papers and media information in French so that people who are not attending the Conference may also benefit.

Human face: It was felt that it is important that the Conference puts a human face on the issues of food and nutrition insecurity in Africa by featuring, for instance, children talking about how they are affected by food and nutrition insecurity or farmers talking about the challenges they face. Another suggestion was to commission a video or some other visual piece on the consequences of food and nutrition insecurity.

Media: It was recommended that a media strategy be developed to take effect prior to the Conference in order to raise awareness of the Conference and bring local concerns to the table during the Conference. A number of specific suggestions of media outlets to approach were offered. Appropriate media coverage should also be planned during the Conference.

Exhibits: There was keen interest in having exhibits that reflect the theme of the Conference with all key stakeholders represented.

Networking Evening: It was suggested that one of the evenings be set aside for specific networking purposes.

Participants

There was general agreement that, given the focus on action and implementation, the Conference should be an invitation-only event where the key actors and stakeholders from across the continent, sectors, disciplines, and perspectives would be invited. Emphasis was placed on balanced representation of stakeholders in order to have good deliberations. In identifying participants, IFPRI was advised to strike the right sectoral balance as well as the right balance between knowledge generation and implementation. Further care should be taken that stakeholders who have easy access to funds are not over-represented while important stakeholders with financial difficulties are under-represented. It was noted that a more stringent process of identifying who is invited to the Conference needs to be developed.

Suggestions for other participants to invite to the Conference included the following: national human rights commissions; sub-regional and regional bodies, economic commissions, and networks; farmers; people with disabilities; and NGOs and CBOs addressing women's issues. It was recommended that Central Africa be added to the list.

The matter of how many and which heads of state would be attending the Conference was discussed, and the Committee empowered Minister Kisamba-Mugerwa and Dr. Otim to approach President Museveni, who will have the liberty to invite those colleagues he knows are action-oriented and would make valuable input. It was noted that if a large number of heads of state plan on attending the Conference, the increase in budget, protocol and security issues, and the modality of their participation should be carefully considered, particularly whether they will stay with the rest of the Conference participants throughout the three days or have a separate program, and how much time would be "eaten up" in formalities. There was a general leaning towards no more than three or so heads of state.

Partners

Ms. Pandya-Lorch reported that the Government of Germany, through GTZ and InWEnt, have committed to support the Conference. Dr. von Braun noted that IFPRI has not yet widely announced the Conference or approached many partners for co-sponsorship because it felt that it was important, to assure the African ownership and guidance of this Conference, that the CAC first meet. IFPRI will work to raise funds for the Conference but should those funds not be fully forthcoming the Conference will have to be scaled down to a feasible level.

Dr. Adesina informed the CAC that the Rockefeller Foundation will support the Conference.

It was suggested that IFPRI inform key UN institutions in Africa of the Conference to ease securing of travel grants later on for participants.

Date

Ms. Pandya-Lorch informed the CAC that, following an exhaustive review of known events and in consultation with President Museveni's office, the Conference was scheduled for April 1-3, 2004, in Kampala, Uganda.

A Committee member suggested spanning the Conference over five days to allow sufficient time for full discussions but other members counseled that in order to attract the right participants and ensure full participation the Conference should not exceed three days.

Follow-up to the Conference

The approach toward appropriate follow-up to the Conference by IFPRI, the various co-sponsors, and participating organizations was raised.

A member proposed that holding initial regional dialogues prior to the Conference could facilitate exchange between three major players – government, business, and civil society – and lead to further understanding about what is already being done, which would help the Conference to not reinvent the wheel.

It was suggested that the subregional networks as well as the agricultural conference of ministers groups be party to the follow-up activities so that it can be seen how they will take up the issues for implementation.

There was general agreement that the Conference should be linked to and build on ongoing events and initiatives in the region. IFPRI and CAC members should capitalize on country and regional events taking place between now and the Conference in order to feed in and follow on their discussions into the Conference and thereby add value to the deliberations.

The CAC will further discuss follow-up activities at its next meeting as well as at the Conference.

Role of the CAC

There was general agreement that the role of the CAC is to provide guidance on the overall concept, framework, program, and related activities of the Conference to assure relevance and value added, and that the specific details should be left to IFPRI to handle.

Dr. von Braun asked the CAC members if they would consider taking on two additional roles, those of advocacy and of informing IFPRI of potential partners/donors. Regarding advocacy, he asked members to be ambassadors of the Conference, raising awareness, identifying and linking up to preparatory opportunities and events, and inviting colleagues to be critical observers and otherwise influence the preparatory process. Regarding partnership and fundraising, he asked members to share their ideas on whom IFPRI could approach, particularly within Africa, and where appropriate to possibly approach some partners in consultation with and on behalf of IFPRI.

There was general agreement to adopt a policy that permits expansion of the CAC as needed to enable new Conference partners/donors and other key actors, particularly from the business sector, to be represented. It was also agreed that the Committee would conduct much of its business electronically in the months prior to the Conference.

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Ms. Pandya-Lorch outlined next steps following the meeting. Within four to six weeks, the summary report of the meeting will be shared with the Committee as will the revised concept note. Members will be asked to provide comments and feedback over the next two to three weeks. An email group will be established to encourage interaction among Committee members. Thereafter the minutes and concept note will be finalized for sharing with others. The Conference program will be fleshed out and the next version shared with the Committee for feedback in July. IFPRI will also develop a brief for Committee members to share information about the Conference. Other information materials such as brochures, powerpoint presentations, and website will be developed in June and thereafter. New background materials will be commissioned over the summer following a review of existing materials.

It was suggested that the next Committee meeting take place between September and November; Ms. Pandya-Lorch was requested to identify options and inform the Committee.

Dr. Otim warmly thanked all the members for their commitment and engagement, noting that they have enriched the concept and truly made this an African-owned and African-driven Conference.